

CHILDREN OF EGYPT



L. CROWTHER

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CHILDREN OF EGYPT

EGYPT'S PLEA

“ FROM Egypt's land of beauty there echoes o'er the sea
The children's cry for succour, a simple earnest plea,
And little arms out-stretching, their heartfelt longings prove.
Help ! help ! the Moslem children to find a God of love.

Our mud-built homes are pleasant, our country fair and bright,
The tamarisk and palm trees our playful hours delight ;
But there are days of sickness, when death may hover near,
And then how great the darkness, how terrible the fear !

Millions these sad words utter in hopelessness and pain,
Lambs of the kind Good Shepherd who seek for Him in vain.
Which of you who have found Him will go His lost to meet,
Or send the Gospel message to guide their erring feet ?

Oh ! happy English children, your homes are fair and bright,
But with the beauteous sunshine of holy heavenly light ;
Sickness but brings you nearer to Christ, the children's friend,
And death is but the dawning of life that has no end !

Then to the shores of Egypt send back across the sea
The wondrous Gospel story, so sweet, so full, so free ;
Come Islan's sons and daughters, the Saviour's longing prove
To gather Moslem children within His arms of Love.”

F. J. WRIGHT (“Gretchen.”)

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"TELL ME, O SPHINX, YOUR STORY."

CHILDREN OF EGYPT

BY

✓
L. CROWTHER

OLD CAIRO



WITH EIGHT COLOURED ILLUSTRATIONS



FLEMING H. REVELL COMPANY
NEW YORK CHICAGO TORONTO

DEDICATED TO
CAMPBELL, WILLIAM, VIOLET, MARGERY
AND LITTLE STELLA

INTRODUCTION

MY DEAR BOYS AND GIRLS,

It has sometimes been to me an amazing discovery to find out how little is known by children, and even grown up people, about the wonderful Land of Egypt. So I thought it would be well to tell you a little about the land, its size, and the people generally who inhabit it now, and also to tell you a little about the thoughts and ideas of the ancient Egyptians.

There is a proverb in Arabic which says, "Take the secrets of the Elders from their children."

How I wish it were possible for the wishing carpet suddenly to convey children of the West over to the land of Egypt and set them down among the dear little black and brown people who cross my path daily, and who by their great need for a knowledge of the Saviour who died for them, draw forth from one's heart the true love of the Lord Jesus Christ, who when on Earth said: "Suffer little children to come unto Me, and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven."

L. C.

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CHILDREN OF EGYPT

CHAPTER I

THE LAND OF EGYPT

EGYPT is one of the Bible Lands. It is also known as the land of the Pharaohs, the land of the Pyramids, or the Nile Valley. In Arabic it is called "Misr," probably after the man mentioned in Genesis x. 6. Egypt was the home of many of the patriarchs whom we love so well :—Moses, whose wonderful birth and deliverance took place on the banks of the Nile, and whom the Mohammedans call "the mouthpiece of God," Aaron, his brother, and Joseph whose story is so familiar to us all.

Egypt, the land of bondage,—and yet concerning which so many glorious and precious promises are given !

It was Egypt which was honoured in being allowed to give shelter to the Babe of Bethlehem.

Egypt is situated in the north-east corner of the Continent of Africa. It is bounded on the north by the Mediterranean Sea ; on the south by the Anglo-Egyptian Soudan ; on the east by the Red Sea and the Peninsula of Sinai ; and on the west by Tripoli and the great Sahara Desert.

The total area of Egypt is about four hundred thousand square miles, a little more than three times the area of the British Isles. It is almost a rainless country.

The total population of Egypt is about twelve million. Of these about nine million six hundred thousand are natives of the country, and the remainder foreigners. About two-thirds of the people are engaged in agriculture and are known as the "Fellaheen."

The native Christians of the country are called Copts, and they are the true descendants of the ancient Egyptians. They number about six hundred thousand. The Copts were converted to Christianity by St Mark about one thousand eight hundred and sixty years ago.

Egypt has undergone successive invasions. Hyksos or shepherd kings, Ethiopians, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks, Romans, Arabs and Turks have all in their turn ruled Egypt. It might therefore be expected that Egypt would become a mixed race, but the very opposite is the fact. The Egyptian of to-day is little removed, either in type or general characteristics, from his earliest ancestors who occupied the Nile valley many thousands of years ago, at the very dawn of history.

Berbers have come down from the barren and narrow valley of Nubia to hire themselves out as servants, cooks, and doorkeepers. There is scarcely a house in Cairo to be seen without a bench outside and a Berber sitting upon it.

There are also the Orientals of the neighbouring countries ;—Turks, Syrians, Armenians and Algerians. The dialect of Upper Egypt is held in contempt by the inhabitants of the Delta.

There are three types of Egyptians, the Fellaheen or peasants, who stand at the bottom of the social scale, both materially and intellectually ; the townspeople engaged in trade or industry, and considered

above the Fellah both in wealth and intelligence ; and the Pashas and Beys, who are considered the aristocracy of Egypt.

CHAPTER II

ANCIENT LITERATURE OF EGYPT

IT is a wonderful thing to trace the history of literature, which is the written idea or thought of a nation or people.

Perhaps of all literature that of Egypt is the most ancient. It is also very much mixed up with surmise. The hieroglyphic writing was the first practised by the ancient Egyptians—in which the figures of objects are employed to represent ideas or letters.

The word hieroglyphic is taken from the words meaning “ sacred ” and “ writing,” and when the nation began to reduce its thoughts to writing, or to express its thoughts by signs, the people began by using hieroglyphics.

There are three kinds of writing in early Egyptian literature, which have been preserved and handed down to us. The first, the picture language called hieroglyphic, the second, demotic, which was the common language of the people, and the third hieratic, the sacred or priests’ language.

The meaning of hieroglyphics has only been rediscovered in our own day. It came into use about three thousand seven hundred years before Christ, in the time of the first dynasty.

To begin with, the signs represented the things pictured, but gradually came to denote phonetic sounds. Champollion has done much to enlighten

us upon the subject. He became a great student of Egyptology in the year 1818.

In the year 1799 Boussard, a French officer, while digging the foundations of his house at Rosetta, in the Nile Delta, turned up a black stone covered with three kinds of writing, viz.: hieroglyphic, demotic, and Greek. Impressions of the stone were taken and handed over to many earnest students, who came to the conclusion that it had been written in the time of the Greek Empire. Champollion found the key to the deciphering of this stone, which is now reposing in the British Museum. The whole of the literature of Egypt was a closed door to learned men until his time, and it was through this means that the alphabet was eventually found, and the door opened to the study of the inscriptions which cover the walls of the temples and tombs from end to end of Egypt. It is most important to remember that early literature consists mainly of religious writings. A great deal of the Egyptian literature which has come down to us deals to a large extent with the rules and regulations concerning the religious life of the ancient people, and of their ceremonies for their dead. History also finds a place, although there is no thread of continuity, but every man seems to have proclaimed his great deeds on a stone slab or tablet as the fancy seized him. The great prize essay written by Pentaur on the deeds of Rameses the second, a man who seems to have conquered all that came before him, was inscribed on the walls of temples, and a copy is at the present time in the British Museum. Many of these ancient Egyptians seemed to have possessed a great opinion of themselves, judging from the amount of self-laudation in their compositions.



HISTORY WRITTEN ON THE WALLS OF TEMPLES

The kings in those days were addressed as gods. The larger number of inscriptions were written in the hieroglyphic characters.

The business of life has been drawn for us in pictures, many of which are to be seen now, also representations of all kinds of agricultural labour. On the walls of the tomb of Thy you can read the journal of a great man who lived over five thousand years ago. We see how his cattle were killed, how his meat was cooked, and his geese fattened, how his fields were ploughed, his corn grown, reaped, threshed and gleaned, how his houses were built, how he fished and hunted, and how he fulfilled the duties of his daily life.

There was in the literature of Egypt a great deal which concerned the life after death. It was not a strange line of thought when we remember how thoughtful the Egyptians were with regard to immortality. Their term for the grave was "the everlasting house." When a man died his soul was supposed to pass into Hades, to wander through the spirit land and come in contact with all kinds of danger. The heart seems to have been the particular member which suffered, and, even in prehistoric times, was always provided with its own special god, and to charm away all evil spirits the souls were provided with quotations from the *Book of the Dead*.

Every Egyptian wished to lay by a goodly store of charms to help him through the nether world. On their arrival there, the souls had to be judged by Osiris the judge of the dead, and were supposed to be weighed in the scales in his judgment hall, after which each soul was required to make a denial of forty-two sins put before it. The one great theme of their religion was a return to God.

One cannot, however, speak highly of Egyptian

morality, although they were a people so deeply filled with the thought of the hereafter! Their religion must have had a pretence to righteousness, but how far it progressed we are not in a position to say. There was certainly nothing heroic about it, no severe self denial, no strong check upon the human passions, no humility, no forgiveness for injuries inflicted, no belief that all things worked together for good, but of course they had not the help of the Holy Spirit.

In the beginning there was the knowledge of the true God, and the question presents itself to our minds—How came they to have these mixed ideas? First, we must know they had no record, no revelation. They were left to tradition. They had no guide, and they themselves had lost their land mark. Yet the religious feeling was maintained. They had lost the true knowledge, and came to a worship of the elements, the things which God had given them.

The sun god, Ra, was held in great esteem, as was also the cow, Hat-hor, who was called the goddess of the mountains, and was the instrument in supplying rain. One of the most interesting things to be seen in the Egyptian Museum is the statue of the cow, Hat-hor, which was discovered buried in a little shrine all to itself.

It was against these numerous deities that the anger of God was directed when He scourged Egypt with the ten plagues. For instance, the Nile was worshipped as the great water god, "Hapi," represented with a frog in his left hand. The divinity Nile or "Hapi" was in this first plague disgraced, and turned into an object of horror. Other divinities were also involved in the humiliation. Several kinds of fish in the Nile were considered sacred, these too were smitten. The frogs, emblems of fertility and

productiveness, came from the divinity Nile. By this plague the Egyptian goddess, "Heka," was discredited. She had the head of a frog; consequently the frogs were sacred animals and might not be killed.

Beetles were regarded as emblems of the sun god, "Kheper" (represented with a beetle for his head), and were therefore sacred. The Scarabaeus, or figure of the beetle, was worn by the Egyptians as an amulet or charm, and was carved on the tombs, etc., being looked upon as the emblem of immortality, eternity and resurrection.

There was a temple at Memphis to the sacred bull, Apis—and cows, certainly all white cows, were sacred to the goddess Isis. So you see animal worship received a severe shock, at the time when Pharaoh hardened his heart and would not let the children of Israel go.

CHAPTER III

THE STORY OF A RIGHTEOUS LIFE

APART from the Valley of the Nile and the Delta, the greater part of Egypt is nothing but desert where no one can live, but here and there ooze up springs of water through the parched earth, called Oases, and around them grow little patches of green trees and bushes. These spots are like the shadow of a rock in a weary land to the merchant, who has often to make long journeys across the desert.

The merchant can never travel without his camel, as the distance between the Oases is very long, and "the father of the hump" as the camel is sometimes called in desert language, can drink enough water

to last for several days, and so it is able to carry its master safely over long tracts of sand.

One day a tired, weary pilgrim, who had made a long journey over the desert, stood before the empty tomb of his ancestors, and this is what he read :—

“ I have committed no fraud against any man. I have not tormented the widow. I have not spoken falsely in the tribunal nor do I know ill faith. I have done no forbidden thing. I have not exacted of the taskmaster more work than he could do daily. I have not been neglectful. I have not been idle. I have not refused my debts, nor have I wearied in well-doing. I have not done that which is an abomination to the gods. I have not slandered the slave to his master. I have starved none. I have made none to weep. I have slain none, nor have I commanded to murder by treachery. I have not stolen the temple bread, I have not seized the cakes offered to the gods. I have not taken the food or fillets of the dead. I have not gained money by fraud. I have not changed the measure of corn. I have not defrauded the breadth of a finger on the hand, I have not seized land. I have not changed the plates of the balance. I have not falsified the balance. I have not taken the milk from the mouths of sucklings. I have not hunted the sacred animals in their pasture. I have not taken the divine birds in their net. I have not fished for the sacred fish in their ponds. I have not kept the water back in its season. I have not cut a branch of water in its passage. I have not quenched the sacred fire at its hour. I have not driven the sacred oxen from their pasture. I have not turned aside the god in his procession. I am pure, I am pure, I am pure, I am pure.” Such must have been the ideas of those who lived in those bygone days :—No sense of his own need,

THE STORY OF A RIGHTEOUS LIFE 17

and no sense or realisation of how he would stand in the eyes of a Holy God.

Thirty-eight capital I's in this man's profession. How sad that as a child he knew nothing of Him who said "Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly of heart." I hope you or I would have added, "And when ye have done all these things, say, 'We are unprofitable servants.'"

The old pilgrim pursued his journey pondering over what he had just read on the tomb of his ancestors, and wondered how he could so correctly have fulfilled all the obligations laid upon him. Poor old Servant of the Merciful One, for that was his name, was inclined to think that his ancestor had lacked a true knowledge of himself. At the same time there was a desire in the heart of the old pilgrim himself to be found perfect in the day of judgment and worthy to live in paradise for ever.

He had a haunting memory of a sin committed long years ago. How well he remembered on a certain day, during the month of the Ramadan fast, being taken to the judge who commanded him to be beaten with forty stripes because he had dared to break his fast before the setting of the sun.

"Why have I no rest yet from the memory of my sin?" said the old pilgrim, as he was borne silently over the desert by his faithful camel towards his home away yonder nestling in the midst of the shady palm grove.

"Have I not," he went on, "made many sacrifices and have I not performed many pilgrimages, have I not sprinkled the blood of the sacrifices over the door-posts of my house, and yet my heart is still crying out for peace, and I cannot find it?"

Poor old pilgrim, he had grown up without a knowledge of his inheritance in Christ Jesus. No happy

memories had he of his childhood days. No thoughts of Jesus to help him on his way.

Have you ever thought what it would be like to grow up without a knowledge of the love of God, and without any news of His great salvation—and with no happy holy memories of kneeling at a gentle mother's knee where you learned to pray to your Father in heaven?

No wonder this aged pilgrim sought in vain for rest and peace. He was in his ignorance trying to work out his own salvation, ignorant all the time that acceptance with God was a free gift, because he had never been told about it.

Children of the West, will you rally round the banner of prayer and make a resolve that you will do all in your power to send a knowledge of salvation to the millions of little children now growing up in the midst of a great shadowy cloud of sin and darkness in the land of Egypt, so that you may be like ministering angels who are sent to guide their feet into the way of peace?

CHAPTER IV

THE STORY OF THE NILE

“HE that hath not seen Egypt hath not seen the greatest wonder of the world.”

“Your Nile loads you with benefits and bounties every day, it is for you that it flows from such a distance. Alas! in going away from you my tears are doomed to run down as abundantly as its waters.”

An old historian once visited Egypt and was so struck by the physical condition of the country that he said, “Egypt is a gift from the Nile.”

This sentence fully explains the relation between the river and the land. Without the Nile, Egypt would be desert, and so this wonderful river from time immemorial has been taken into great consideration by the inhabitants of the country. As you already know, the ancient Egyptians looked upon it as one of their gods. No one was allowed to throw into it any unclean matter, even the birds which ate the worms from its banks—so keeping the river clean—were looked upon as sacred, and no one was allowed to do them any harm. Land taxes were taken only from that part of the land which had been covered by its waters during the inundation. The rise of the Nile differed year by year, so the taxes were modified accordingly. It has always been the custom to celebrate the rise of the Nile by a feast, and the people looked upon the celebration as a time for leisure and pleasure. Kings, officials, and notables of all kinds migrated at this particular time to houseboats, dahabeyahs and ships decorated for the event.

Up and down the river they would go until the Nile attained its highest point. Then it is said that a beautiful maiden, richly dressed, was with the consent of her father thrown to the god Nile. This cruel custom was abolished by an order from the first Christian Emperor Constantine.

During the first Arabic conquest the ceremony of celebrating the flood was as follows :—

The director of the Nilometer at Rodah, whose duty it was to measure the rise, had to write a secret report ; then the Caliph, on receiving the same, would set out with his Vizier, both richly dressed, bearing trays and vases of massive gold and silver, with a jar filled with musk and saffron. On their arrival at the Nilometer the jar was presented to the said director, who mixed

the contents of the jar on a tray, carefully anointing the pillar of the gauge.

During this proceeding a Koran reciter was engaged to read passages from the sacred book.

Soon after, the Caliph returned to his palace, sailing down the Nile followed by his Grand Vizier.

On the following day the director arrived at the palace of the Caliph dressed in gorgeous apparel followed by a great procession with music and dancing.

Upon entering the palace the director received from the Caliph the sum of two thousand pounds carried by four men on mules—each one having five hundred—to distribute to the passers by, and, on reaching the pillar of the gauge, food was given to the hungry.

On the third morning of the feast the Caliph, supported on a carpet, and surrounded by cushions, arrived at the head of the canal, accompanied by his ministers.

A tent was pitched where they might take rest, prayers were recited during the cutting of the dam, which sent the water flowing along the canal through the city, and a great banquet terminated the ceremony.

Of recent years the day for cutting the dyke was heralded by men and boys walking through the streets of Cairo with drums and flags of green, yellow and white, stopping before the people's doors, reciting flowery poetry, and making a very unmusical noise. On the actual day of cutting the dyke, the "akaba," or large Nile boat, gaily decorated with flags and lanterns, and with a native band on board, started from the city ferry and sailed majestically down to the dyke—followed by another boat—the occupants firing off cannons at intervals.

In the meantime, men of arts and crafts, masons,



THE NIGHT OF THE CUTTING OF THE DYKE

joiners, smiths, stone-cutters and sculptors followed in grand procession, beating drums and hoisting banners. When everything was ready, workmen cut the dam and the water flowed gaily through. Of late the "khalig" or canal has been filled up, and converted into a street, and consequently the men of arts and crafts are not called for, but the anniversary still maintains its chief characteristic, that of great rejoicing and brilliant illuminations.

Modern travellers say, "If you once drink of the waters of the Nile, you are bound to return and drink again." So you see the Nile still maintains its charm for ancient and modern alike, though, sad to say, it is no longer kept sweet and pure as of old.

CHAPTER V

TOPSY-TURVY CUSTOMS

ARABIA has been called topsy-turvy land, and Egypt too, I think might be called by the same name, because there are so many things done in exactly the opposite way to what they are done in England. Here are a few instances.

A little boy is told to write out an exercise in his copy-book and he promptly begins on the right-hand side of the top line of the last page of his book. Now you of course would begin on the left-hand side of the first page—at least that is what I did—when I was at school.

Another very topsy-turvy thing which happens is this :—

When there is a feast of any kind and there are little boys and girls in the family, it is always the boy who

gets the best gallabeea to wear, and the best seat in the guest room, and who receives the most attention, and gets the best piece of sweetmeat. The little sister often stands shyly in the background, gazing with longing eyes at her favoured little brother. The reason for this is that in Egypt boys are thought a great deal more of than girls.

When a baby boy is born there is great rejoicing, and the mother uses a large amount of trickery so as to make the evil spirit think the boy is a girl.

When you visit a new born baby for the first time, you must say something like the following sentence. "What is that horrid-looking bundle you have there? It looks like pitch." You may be allowed a glimpse of the so described parcel, and even if ever such a pretty little face peeps at you from behind its kohl¹-besmeared eyes, you must say "horrid little thing," and then resort to the ordinary topic of conversation which is generally made up of salaams.

Still more topsy-turvy customs have we in Pharaoh's land. We not only write from right to left but we read and sing and play music all in the same way. When you visit the Sunday school you shall sing "Jesus loves me, this I know," beginning at the right hand side of the book.

Then the funniest and yet saddest topsy-turvy custom is the reversion of that grand command, "Children obey your parents." "Parents obey your children" is the usual order of the day in Egypt, and you can picture to yourself all the sad results which follow.

One very hot day a little boy named Understanding was carried to the doctor. "This little child," said the doctor to the mother, "is very ill, and if he is to

¹ Kohl = charcoal dust.

get better he must stay with kind nurses in the hospital for sick people." Understanding was only a little boy, and did not really know how to choose for himself, neither did he know what was best for him, although his name would make you think he did ; but because he said, " No, no, no," his mother looked at the doctor and said, " he has said no, and who am I that I should alter his word ? " and so little Understanding went home to die !

Children of Egypt are not privileged as are the children of England. They are seldom taught anything that is good. They are brought up in a land where there is plenty to make them wicked but nothing to make them good. And yet how lovable they are ! Don't you long that they should know all about Jesus, the loving tender Jesus, who makes your life so pleasant and good ?

One day, when the school bell rang for assembly, a sad-looking woman was seen anxiously looking for the teacher. When asked her reason for being there, she replied—" Will you please beat my two boys." " Why ? " said the astonished teacher. " Because I have no rest," replied the mother, " I am a widow ; first one beats me, and then the other."

When remonstrated with, the boys made answer, " Why should we not beat her, she is only a woman ? "

Cruel boys ! But then it is not their fault. Their religion teaches them it is right so to do !

CHAPTER VI

CHILDLIFE IN A MOHAMMEDAN LAND

NOTHING can be more sad than the lot of children in a Moslem land. They fall heirs to all the miseries which ignorant and superstitious parents can bestow upon them. The poor wee mites are denied the ordinary comforts and daily care of a Christian home. The fear of the evil eye adorns them with charms—leather bags, old teeth, and filthy garments—while it deprives them of the pleasures of a bath, clean comfortable clothes, and proper care when ill. (One way of treating sore eyes is to sprinkle powdered brick-dust into them!) Our hearts grow sick as we see poor neglected babies, lying in the sunlight, with their faces covered with Egyptian flies, which excel in perseverance and never let go until they must.

When we remember the careful training, and how jealously the Christian father and mother protect and guard their children from evil, we shudder to think of all the wickedness which surrounds the children in the lands of the False Prophet.

From earliest infancy until they are grown up, they hear evil things spoken of lightly, so that from the very beginning their hearts grow hardened to sin and think little of it. Then, too, they are denied the joys of home. They have yet to learn what that word means. They know so little of it that they have no such word in their language. No wonder that this is the case when often two or more wives live together in one harem. Or the father's interests are centred in several different houses, in each of which one of his wives lives. We have seen some children who scarcely

knew to what home they belonged, going about, as they did, from one house to another where their father's wives were kept.

We must draw a curtain over some of the things which darken the life of the Moslem child, and ask all who read these lines to pray. Pray for the Moslem father, mother and children.

Here is an instance of how a little Moslem child is treated when ill.

One day a tiny girl, named Sorrowful, became very ill. Many were the charms which adorned the unwashed little body—but the power to heal was lacking.

Sorrowful's mother was very anxious that she should get well, as she was her only child, and her father was a very unkind man who would have sent away her mother had the child died. So one day she was dressed in a very funny garment covered with patches, not because the garment was an old one, but in order to make the evil spirit think she was only a poor miserable little girl not worth thinking about. Then the mother started on her journey to a certain mosque wherein was buried an old man who was said to be endued with power, during his lifetime, to charm away demons. So little Sorrowful was laid with many other baby girls by the side of the old man's tomb, so that his spirit might talk to the evil spirit which possessed the child.

In the meantime the mother walked quickly away, and during her absence the chief of demons was supposed to come, and, at the request of the old man's spirit, seize all his little child demons and carry them off. After a time Sorrowful's mother returned, and having placed some lentils and sugar by the old man's tomb as a reward, without speaking, singled out her little girl from the rest and walked quickly

away, back to her home. But, to her agony and amazement, little Sorrowful remained ill.

This would not have been the case had she known of the beautiful hospital, in which was a special ward for little Egyptian children like Sorrowful, where, thank God, many tiny sick ones are now brought, and where they are taught to pray to the Good Shepherd, who alone has the power, and who gives the power to his servants, to heal the sick and lead the blind.

There is a great work for you children of the West to do, that is—to pray that thousands of ignorant and sorrowful mothers may learn of this hospital, and bring their children to hear of Him, who when on earth said :—

“Suffer little children to come unto Me and forbid them not, for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven.”

CHAPTER VII

MOHAMMEDAN CHILDHOOD—*Continued*

THE house of a poor “Fellah” is humble, consisting ordinarily of one room and a large courtyard, and is as a rule dirty.

The walls are of sun-dried mud brick, the roof is made of cotton stalks, and is of course flat, as is the case with all the houses in the East, whence you can understand Peter walking on the roof while praying. The floor is of earth, and a small opening in the wall serves as a window. In such a house live the members of the family with their domestic animals, and in these surroundings Egyptian children of the country class are born and brought up.

These children are not burdened with many clothes

or lessons, but as their parents make a living by industriously turning every inch of Nile mud into use, so the boys and girls when quite small have to work hard, even tiny tots riding on the back of the timid buffalo to drive it home after the day's toil.

Boys are frequently employed to drive donkeys, which are much in demand all over Egypt. Those who make a regular profession of the trade sometimes give their donkeys striking names, especially where tourists are concerned.

There was a donkey once called "Bishop of London," another "Lord Salisbury," another "Telephone," another "President Roosveldt," and another "Yankee Doodle." The boys become very diplomatic in their choice of names for their animals. If the tourist is American, he at once gives the name as "President Roosveldt." If English, "Bishop of London," or some such grand title, thinking to make a little extra backshish by pleasing the representative of the different countries.

A small proportion of the boys may be allowed for a short time to attend the village "kuttab" or school, and, like the children of other nations, they are very inquisitive, and often ask questions which are difficult to answer. Mother of course is the person appealed to, but poor mother is only like a cow or a donkey, knows nothing, and so her child asks in vain. She can teach him nothing about the love of God, love of home-land, or good morals, but instead she fills his mind with fables, and evil fairy tales. He is told not to leave the house after sunset, or walk where it is dark, lest he should be swallowed up by ghosts or some dreadful animals. So the Egyptian boys grow up to be cowards, unable to undertake hard or responsible work. They are not taught to be men,

nor to govern their own passions, nor to seek their country's welfare.

How shall I describe a village kuttāb? I think a picture will be the best description. The slates the boys are holding in their hands are made of tin, upon which they write, with ink and reed pens, quotations from their sacred book. The boy is considered cleverest who can repeat off by heart a great deal of the Koran though perhaps he does not understand a word of it.

Once upon a time not long ago there was a kuttāb in which sat an old sheikh with a number of little boys around him. He kept by his side a pile of water-melon skins and the peelings of several oranges, and whenever a boy made a great noise would throw at his head a piece of this rubbish.

Little girls, as I have said before, are considered to be not worth teaching, and are generally conspicuous by their absence. But although the country child knows so little of school life, yet with the town boys it is different. The desire for education is growing rapidly, and the town boy spends a fair portion of his time in study.

Play and physical exercises are not encouraged, and boys are instructed by teachers and parents not to play but to study. There is an Arabic proverb which the father of the boy generally leaves with the teacher when authorising him to punish his child, which says, "You may have the flesh, and I the bones," meaning that if ever he is found playing he must be severely chastised.

Little boys are sometimes punished by being made to kneel on small pebbles, or by holding a heavy thing with one or both hands raised above the head for a considerable length of time. A favourite way of punishing was to lash the boy on his bare heels. In

some schools during the Nile flood, the teacher stamps the leg of each boy with a seal dipped in red ink, to prevent them from swimming or bathing, and woe to the boy when inspected at the end of the holiday if the mark of the seal be not found.

When a boy first goes to school, always without the slightest knowledge of learning, he is generally given the verb "to strike" to conjugate, while children of England are given the verb "to love," but in Egypt the verb "to strike" is put to so much practical use, that it is not to be wondered at its being given as a study. When we paint a door we "strike it," with paint, or if we play an organ we are said to strike it. And when the people wash their clothes, they beat them for all they are worth on large stones, using Nile mud as soap. Sometimes the Sheikh during lesson time is half asleep or he feels a little indisposed, so he sits lazily on a stool and says in a dreamy voice, "Oh children, you must not make a noise, or get into any mischief, because I am ill to-day, and you must teach one another." Then he will appoint some of the elder boys as overseers, to write down the names of any who are naughty. The younger boys rise up in open revolt and there is a humming, buzzing, and quarrelling noise. And as there are no full stops, commas, or capital letters in the Arabic language, it is difficult to know where and what they are reading.

Games and play do not enter largely into child life in Egypt, but here and there you see the natural tendency of children breaking forth, in the excitement of flying a home-made kite, or cruelly teasing a poor little sparrow or kitten.

They have several games of their own which when translated into English have not much meaning; one is :—

THE GAME OF THE MOTHER WITH HER DAUGHTER
AND THE CAT

and is as follows :—

The children form a circle facing each other. The mother places in the centre some leaven and says : "Take care of the leaven, oh children, while I go to bring water from the river." The cat who has been in hiding rushes out as soon as the mother has gone, saying, "Open the door!" The girls say "Nay! Our mother will beat us." At last the cat enters by force and runs away with the leaven. The mother returns and wails out, "Where is the leaven?" "In the cupboard," say the children. "Look, look," says the mother, "There is nothing!" "Under the tray," say the children. "Look, look, there is nothing!" and so they continue, until at last the cat appears and mews loudly. Then a child follows the mother, pursuing the cat, who dodges in and out among the children until at last he is caught and receives a well-deserved beating.

THE GAME OF THE BLACK RAVEN

One child takes the rôle of the mother, another that of the raven, who stands before the mother and begins to snatch away her children. The mother tries to save them, but the raven says, "I am the black raven which snatches away children." The mother says, "But I am their mother and will save them," but without avail. The raven continues to snatch one by one, until only one is left, and the mother makes one desperate effort to save it. The raven says, "I must have your last child." "Who will bake my bread?" says the mother. "I am coming," says the raven. "But who will cook me food?" "I am

just going to snatch," says the raven. "But who will clean the house?" says the distracted mother; but the raven has gone with the last little girl, and the poor lonely mother sits down to wail.

Boys and girls are married at such an early age in Egypt, that they have very little time to play.

A mother, as a rule, wishes to marry her son in order to secure to herself a servant, and the little wife becomes no more than her husband's slave, or plaything, and the general drudge of the house.

A little girl when born is often chosen by her parents to wed a certain cousin, and when the time comes, she will be married to him without ever having seen him. It is quite a detail whether they love each other or not. In Arabic, as a rule, the man always speaks of his wife as "The daughter of his uncle," as those of you who have read *Arabian Nights* will know.

It is a great offence to the parents if after the marriage the wedded pair express a desire to live in a separate house. They consider it to be a token of disloyalty to them.

CHAPTER VIII

SUPERSTITIONS

THE Egyptians are a people full of dark sayings and superstitions. And, as I have said, you must be very careful to conceal your admiration for a new baby. If you promise to say "horrid little thing," when you see it, I will take you to the ceremony of naming an Egyptian child.

Some houses have good-sized doors with a smaller

door cut in the centre, and mushrabia or lattice-work windows, through which pretty faces may peep without danger of being seen.

We knock, and an invisible hand, working somewhere in the upper region of the house, draws a long piece of rope attached to the latch, which opens.

The Gospel story has more than once found its way into this house, so we are not strangers when we meet our hostess. But to-day she takes very little notice of us, as her thoughts are otherwise engaged.

Gathered around her sits a group of black-robed women, and hidden away somewhere in that dark, dismal room lies the nameless baby, wrapped up in an old piece of rag. The latter must be very old, in order that the child may live, and walk quickly !

Now a corn sieve is produced, and baby, well covered up from the evil eyes around, is placed inside.

The mother stands over it, saying. "Hear the words of your father." Whereupon she picks up the sieve and drops it again. This performance is repeated six times, and baby gets six bumps while the following words are being said: "Hear the words of your grandmother!" "Beware of the house running on wheels!" "Beware of the Car which runs by its spirit!" "Both of which can eat you quickly!"

Then the mother walks over and around her child three times, saying "Upon the beloved prophet be prayers and peace." Thus ends the ceremony, and baby is the proud possessor of a name meaning some quality, such as Gentle, Kind, Compassionate.

When a child is born, a large knife and loaf of bread are placed by its side, and on the fifth day some beans are added, also a tall-necked jar full of water, the handles of which are decorated with gold earrings, the neck with a gold necklace, and a red fez over the



THE SACRED TREE

mouth. The belief is that as long as there are bread, beans and water for the evil spirit, it will refrain from an attack upon the child. A mixture of salt, rice, and split peas is sprinkled about the neighbours' houses.

The first sentence a child learns to speak is probably a phrase of impoliteness and insult, which the parents rejoice at and admire, on hearing it from the mouth of their little one for the first time, quite forgetting that when they are grown up, instead of rising up and calling them blessed, their children will live to curse them. A very dear little boy was once brought to the Mission Hospital and was almost dead from a dreadful disease in his throat, which deprived him of his speech for several days. The doctors used their skill and God blessed their efforts, but it was terribly sad one day to hear the father say to his little son, who was just getting back the power of speech, "Show your uncle how cleverly you can curse him!" Children of England, are you not glad to have been born in a Christian land?

One day when I was visiting a village in the Nile Delta, I saw in the distance a crowd of women, one of whom was carrying on her head a round basket containing a baby six days old. They were hurrying to the Mission doctor, as baby's life was in danger. An operation was performed, and some few days after, I thought baby would be all the better for a bath, and I, all intent upon my work at the sunny end of the houseboat upon which I was staying, did not notice a group of dusky-looking women crouching on the banks of the river, who were so shocked at seeing baby turn up its pink toes in appreciation of a bath, that they were heard to exclaim "She deserves to be transported."

Many little babies are not washed until they are a

year old, but then you see it is not to be wondered at, because the mothers were brought up in exactly the same way. One day I was trying to show a woman what she should do, to make herself a little less grimy, and she walked away muttering to herself, "What queer orders these people give; funny world this; funniest thing of all is when they tell you to wash from head to foot. They don't agree with these things in *my* village!"

The Afreet or evil spirit is a thing to be dreaded, and much is done to avoid the anger of the demon, who is likely at any moment to seize man, woman or child. Consequently, the ignorant people stand in great awe of him. A poor young girl was said one day to be possessed by a demon, so the usual method of casting out the devil was resorted to.

Her friends are invited, and the first thing to be done is to ascertain what is the wish of the spirit.

The chief actress in the drama approaches the one possessed, and whispers into her ear "O Spirit, what is the thing you desire most?" The answer comes back, "I wish for a silver shawl!" If the Afreet be of masculine gender he will wish for a long cloak and red fez. If a native of the black country, he will wish for a red cloak and a red shawl! If the Afreet is a mermaid, she will ask for a dish of water in which to swim!

The afflicted will then desire a bag of nuts, thirteen long candles, and a white gallabees. Last of all a sheep is brought and killed, and she is made to drink of the warm blood, caught in the palm of the hand, three times.

Then the blood is sprinkled over the white gallabees in which the girl is robed, and forming a waist band is a string of silver charms; across the forehead is

fixed a set of charms, as also on each forearm. She then sits alone for seven days, and no one must break the spell by presenting salaams; tom-toms are beaten incessantly to keep the demon in a sweet temper.

If after all this the woman remains ill, the spirit is appealed to, and he will say, "I am not the cause. You must make a pilgrimage to *Abu Saood*, or visit the old woman buried under the tree on the Island of Rodah."

This tree is visited by hundreds of women on the national holiday every year, and is a mass of dirty rags, hair, teeth, etc., while flags form festoons from branch to branch, upon which are written "God," "Mohammed," and the names of several sheikhs.

Often legs, arms and hands of ancient Egyptians are dug up and worn by sick people, for which they pay large sums of money.

Thick iron bands are worn around the necks of the women, to charm away death from their children. And these are the people who say they believe and trust in God.

Thank God, there are many who are learning to put their trust in the true God, who long ago gave a promise that the day should come when the Egyptians should know the Lord, and of them the Lord would be able to say: "Blessed be Egypt my people, . . . and Israel mine inheritance." I wonder if you know where in Isaiah this promise is to be found?

One day quite recently I went with one of the Bible-women to visit at the house of one of her neighbours. A company of women, more or less related to each other, lived together. One of the number had been ailing for some weeks, and the time of our visit was the

second day of the ceremony for casting out the supposed demon. There sat the weird-looking old woman covered with the blood of the sheep. She looked truly dreadful, and it was not difficult to imagine that she might indeed be possessed.

We were very careful to take not the least notice of her, lest we should break the spell.

Around the room sat about a dozen other women robed in gorgeous apparel, wearing costly jewels, and in the centre of the room stood a table covered with plates of nuts, and bread illuminated with various sizes of candles, all gifts to the evil spirit.

The centre of attraction was a shallow vessel filled with costly jewels all of which had been specially requested by the feminine demon.

At the time of our visit they were all resting, quite tired out from their labours, but at the hour of the evening meal everything was to be in full swing again, dancing, beating tom-toms, and enticing the unwelcome visitor forth by snatches of song used upon such occasions.

We rose to take our leave with a warm invitation from a member of the party to join them in the evening and watch the proceedings, making a stipulation that we should leave our Western head-dress at home.

In due time a little party arrived at the Bible-woman's house all excited to think they were to be allowed to witness one of the strange customs of the Egyptians.

Alas, we were met by Sitt F., who wore a very disappointed expression, and told that the evil spirit had strongly objected to our presence in the afternoon. It had taken a special dislike to my hat, and also to one of our number who had unwisely remarked upon the jewels in the vessel. But in reality we knew it

was because we were Christians that our presence had been objected to.

We turned our faces home-ward again, to pray for light to shine through the darkness, remembering how the seventy returned with joy to tell Jesus that even the devils were subject unto them through His name.

CHAPTER IX

THE OLD AND THE NEW

It will be interesting to say a word about the place in which this narrative has been written.

It is all so picturesque, and brings before our minds three stages in the history of Egypt. The old, the modern, and the new.

It is the Church Missionary Society's Hospital in Old Cairo, the southern part of Cairo city founded in the year 641 A.D.

To the west lie the great pyramids of Gizeh, built by the Pharaohs about five thousand years ago ; forming a foreground is the famous and fertile Rodah Island, with its Nilometer instituted by the Mohammedan Caliphs. and the beautiful gardens of the Pashas. A few minutes' walk will bring you to the spot where it is supposed the babe Moses was taken from his ark of bulrushes by the river's brink, the majestic sails of the Nile boats tipping the tall palm trees as they wind in and out past the bend of the river.

To the east, about half an hour's walk from the hospital, you may stand where it is believed Joseph erected the stores for keeping the corn during the seven years of famine.

A little farther northward lies an old fort, dating from the time of the Persian invasion, known at present as the Convent of Babylon, inside of which there is a Coptic church. A little further on you find a gigantic fortress, built in the time of the Romans. It was surrounding this fort that the fight took place between the Arab invaders and the Coptic garrison under their Greek commandant, and inside the fortress the contract and terms of surrender were written and signed. This fort is now known as St George's Convent, containing several very interesting Coptic churches, famous for their wonderful ivory carvings, and visited every year by thousands of tourists.

Two minutes' walk will bring you on to the Coptic church of Abu Sarga, where tradition says Mary took refuge with the child Jesus, when they fled into Egypt.

Close to Abu Sarga there is a Jewish synagogue greatly prized by the Jews, for they believed that Moses held services in it during his stay in Egypt, and that it contains the grave of the prophet Jeremiah himself.

There are several other Coptic churches, scattered over a distance of two or three miles, to the east of the Mission buildings.

About five minutes' walk to the north-east of the hospital is situated the Mosque of 'Amr. It was the first mosque to be built in Egypt, and in it the Khedive performs his prayers once a year—a time when a prisoner bound in chains receives a free pardon.

Often the voice of the Muezzin rings out clearly from the minaret of the mosque calling followers of the False Prophet to prayer, while simultaneously the church bell will remind the Coptic Christians that services are going on in the Name of Him who came to suffer and die for the sins of the whole world, but whose suffering and death are despised by the Mohammedans.

In the Mosque of 'Amr, there is a column of great antiquity.

It is said that, when Omar was building the mosque, he asked his master the Caliph Omar for a column from Mecca. The Caliph commanded the said column to migrate to the Nile, but it would not stir. He repeated his command still more urgently, but the column remained immovable. A third time he repeated his command, angrily striking the column with his corbash,¹ but still without effect. At length he cried out—"I command thee in the name of God, O Column, arise and betake thyself to Cairo," whereupon the column began to walk, and a vein of the marble is shown as the still visible mark of the corbash. Two other columns, placed on the opposite side of the mosque, promise salvation to the man who can pass between them. As the space is a very narrow one, woe be to the man, woman, boy or girl who gets stuck fast in the attempt to pass through!

In the olden days the Greek Byzantine coinage bore the inscription: "In the Name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost," but Abd el Malak, in the time of the Caliphs, changed it and substituted the words: "There is no God but God."

I wonder if you children could draw a map outline of old Cairo from the description of the places I have given you. If so, you must dot in as well the hospitals for men, women and children, where many thousands hear the Story of God's love year by year; a little church belonging to C. M. S.; a flourishing day school for girls, whose parents have been taught that little girls *are* worth teaching, and a large building containing a day school for boys and a small boarding school. In the city of Cairo itself there are two more schools,

¹ Whip.

with a training class for women teachers, as well as a great deal more work which does not concern us in this book. What does concern you is your duty in praying for all the children of Egypt who find their way to our Mission schools, and for all the thousands who do not, that by some means or other they may find their way to the Lord Jesus Christ.

CHAPTER X

A CAMEL RIDE

THIS is only a journey in thought—in reality it would take at least three or four days to accomplish.

I wonder if any of you have ever sat on the hump of a camel. It is quite an experience in one's life to do so. Time is no object, so we will not arrange an hour to be back. No girls for this journey, and remember, boys, the leader of your camel will probably be a little son of the desert, so you will no doubt have the opportunity if you keep on the look-out to gain an insight into the life and heart of your little protector.

A few grunts and growls from the gaily caparisoned "Father of the hump," a jerk forward, a jerk backwards, and then a seemingly breathless leap into the air, and you are mounted on your camel, gazing from the heights upon your little companion, who, upright in figure, and with silent footsteps, leads you over the desert.

The noiseless tread of the great animal upon which you are riding and its swinging motion bring you face to face with the wonderful pyramids, towering high above all other buildings, standing alone in the desert, and the dear old Sphinx, a little beyond, gazing with

pathetic eyes into the vast unknown. We stand awestruck before it with some such thought as this running through our minds : " Tell me, O Sphinx, your story—whence came you ? " but it answers never a word, and still gazes with that far-away look into space, and all we learn of the Sphinx is that for seven thousand years the sun has risen and set, encircling for a time its huge grey body in all the glowing Egyptian sunset tints ; then the mantle of darkness wraps itself around the silent form, adding another day to the seven thousand years, and the secret of the Sphinx is still its own.

Your little camel boy is looking up at you wondering what you think of the wonders of his country. You have been asking his name and he tells you it is Abdel Nabi, which means " Servant of the Prophet." Perhaps as we journey along you will get to know something more about him, for, although he has never been inside a school in his life, his quick but undeveloped little brain has not been idle during his journeys with Western visitors ; he has perhaps already packed away into his brain box some new word picked up from your conversation. Let us keep along the track of the Nile valley, making our way up country. Suddenly we come to a standstill, all eyes in one direction, facing a village nestling among the palm trees. We were once attacked by robbers from this village, but the centre of attraction is not the village, but a huge stone statue lying under the shade of the date trees. Whose can it be ? It is the figure of Rameses II., the Pharaoh of the oppression, whose history is recorded on some of the great pylons at Karnak.

Now we must pass on, as we have much to see and far to go.

“What is the name of this town on the canal?”
“Oh,” said little Abd el Nabi, “this is the Fayoum, and this water is called the River of Joseph.” “Will you tell me why it is called by this name?” And Abd el Nabi, nothing loth to relate the legends of his beloved desert, said, “I will tell you!”

“Once upon a time, thousands of years ago, King Pharaoh wished to marry his daughter to another king, but Pharaoh was very perplexed in his mind because he had no dowry to bestow in the shape of land, except a strip of marshy ground which all his ministers said could not be drained in a thousand days. At last Joseph was called before Pharaoh and, when asked his opinion concerning the marshy district, knelt before the king and said, ‘Be it known unto the king, that if he will trust his servant to carry out this work, it shall be completed in ninety days, and then shall the marriage cry go forth throughout the land in honour of Pharaoh’s daughter.’

“The work was begun and completed at the appointed time, and, in the place of the useless marshy tract of land, there flowed through the country a beautiful stream banked on either side by lovely gardens. The king was so pleased that he gave it the name of Bahr Yusef, or ‘Joseph’s river,’ and the town which by degrees sprang up he called ‘Alf Youm,’ which means in Arabic ‘a thousand days,’ and thus we get the modern name, El Fayoum.”

Now we must get on, but we will rest when we get to the town of Minieh. “Minieh,” said Abd el Nabi, “was the ancient burial place for sacred cats; quite near the town is a catacomb through which you may walk for one hour and a half without reaching the end.” Hundreds of sacred cats were mummified thousands of years ago, and buried here with great ceremony.

“ I would not kill a cat, not for worlds,” said Abd el Nabi, “ because the soul of my grandmother when she died migrated to a cat, and if I were to kill one, the ghost of my grandmother would surely haunt me. We children of the desert say a cat has seven spirits. A long time ago, when Persia made war with Egypt, the Persians placed an army of wild cats in their front ranks. The Egyptians were terrified and beat a hasty retreat, leaving victory with the wild quadrupeds and the Persians.”

Abd el Nabi was looking very tired, but politeness forbade him to speak of himself as being so in our company. So we dismount, leaving our camels behind in charge of Abd el Nabi, who had met various uncles and cousins on the way and who undertook the charge of our retinue, while we travelled on a very ordinary train as far as Luxor, visiting all the wonderful ruins of temples there to be seen. Crossing the river we ride through the quiet desert to the city of the dead, where among the hills and valleys, deep down in secret chambers, lie the bodies of ancient kings and queens, their life story set forth in the mystical writings on the walls of their tombs, while the bodies are encircled in casings containing many jewels of gold and precious stones, as necessary to their happiness in the life of the world to come, as they had been in the life that had passed. Time and space there is not to tell of all the wonderful things we saw, relics of Egypt's greatness; the lost chord of Egypt's magnificence, where is it?

There is a temple at Karnak which has recorded on its walls, in the hieroglyphic writings of which I have told you, the Battle of Shishak. Read 2 Chron. xii. 1-10, and 1 Kings xiv. 25, 26, where it says :—

“ And it came to pass, in the fifth year of king

Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem ; and he took away the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house ; he even took away . . . all the shields of gold which Solomon had made."

This wonderful temple took something like fifteen hundred years to build. No one builder was responsible for the whole, but each king tried to outdo his predecessor in building a still more handsome memorial to himself.

We make our journey back, gathering up our forces at the place where we left them, and Abd el Nabi, who, refreshed by his rest, was quite ready to join us on our return journey. At the end everybody agreed they had spent a happy and profitable time. "Only one thing," said a member of the party, "made me feel sad as well as glad ; that was the story the little servant of the prophet told me about himself and his tiny brother, which is as follows :—Abd el Nabi was the eldest of two brothers who loved each other dearly. They lived in a little mud hut under the shade of the lofty palm trees in a far-away village. Both used to go out very early in the morning to work in the fields, Abd el Nabi doing the heavy work, and little Peace, his brother, leading about the animals. They had no one else in the world, so they were all in all to each other. One morning, Abd el Nabi rose from his straw mat on the floor to hear his small brother groaning with pain, and when Peace tried to walk he fell down again ; so that day he had to stay at home all alone. Each day he grew more sick and ill, and Abd el Nabi spent all his money in bringing barbers and people to charm away the evil spirit which he now firmly believed had taken possession of Peace ; but he only grew worse and worse every day. Now, however,

comes a nice part of the story. Abd el Nabi's sorrow was turned into joy one day, by a stranger telling him of a place where he was sure little Peace could be made quite well, so with joy he hurried to his hut where his brother had been lying day after day with no one to take care of him, and told him the glad news, but alas ! when Abd el Nabi's excitement cooled down he began to reflect upon the journey—all his money was gone, and the distance to the great city was a long one.

Now it happened that these two little brothers had a lamb which they loved intensely. It really belonged to Abd el Nabi. Could he, for the sake of his little brother, make the sacrifice and sell his lamb ? Yes, he would ! and with his arm around the neck of his pet, unbeknown to Peace, he led it forth, and sold it into the hand of strangers. Then he crept back with a sorrowful heart for the loss of his lamb, yet glad that he could now take his little suffering brother to the great doctor. One very hot day, these two little boys arrived at the Christian hospital gates, trembling lest anything should happen to keep them outside ; but nothing did happen, and soon little Peace was safely tucked up in a nice bed in one of the wards of the C. M. S. Hospital, and there he heard, for the first time in his life, about the death of the Lord Jesus for the sins of the whole world, even about Him who once called the little ones around Him saying, "Suffer the little children to come unto Me."

After many weeks of suffering little Peace got well, and the two brothers were once more united in their tiny village hut, the one telling the other of the wonderful things he had seen and heard during his stay in the hospital ward.

CHAPTER XI

A DAY'S SHOPPING

I KNOW boys and girls are very fond of looking into shop windows, so shall we have a day's shopping in Egypt? We must all keep together, or surely we shall be lost in trying to thread our way up the crowded Mouski into the native bazaars. We will turn off first to the right into the tent bazaar and also the scent bazaar. What are all those little children doing, each one busy with a coarse piece of canvas, working into it all kinds of funny pictures? Another day if you take a long ride up behind the Pyramids you may see many of those bits of canvas made into one huge tent in which some people live right away in the desert.

"But do those little children never go to school?" "Oh! dear no!" says the Moslem, "what is the use of sending them to school? They have no brains, especially the little girls; they are only like the cows and sheep in the fields." "How sad," you say, and turn away into a curious place, with long narrow passages; you can almost shake hands from some points across the way. On either side are rows of what look like broad cupboards with little shelves filled with fancy bottles, and seated in the middle of the floor, crosslegged, is a well-dressed Sheikh. These are the little perfumery shops, and each vendor of his wares will try his best to entice you, especially if you look with longing eyes at his possessions. The owner of one of these little shops, before he enters into business with you, will often say, "Bismillah er Rahmân er Raheem," which means, "In the name of God the most Merciful." At the same time he is thinking how cleverly he is going to

cheat you. At last you elect to sit upon a very narrow ledge, and the seller of scent will touch your hand or glove with the stopper from a bottle containing some very powerful scent such as Attar of Roses, Violet, etc. You are persuaded to choose a very tiny decorated bottle, full of strong Attar of Roses, for which you pay fifteen Egyptian piastres (3s.). The bottle is carefully sealed and you will probably carry it back to England with you, but alas! when you open it you discover a very watery solution of Attar of Roses, instead of the real thing. "How could it have happened?" you say. Therein lies a secret. The Egyptians are taught from childhood the art of lying and stealing, so he probably gave you another little bottle which looked exactly like the one you purchased, having changed it while your attention was given to something else.

Now we will cross over into another narrow street and wend our way into the Khan el Khaleely, named after one Khaleel, "the most honourable." What is that dismal-looking building with the large gateway? Oh! that is where a great many little girls are employed to change billowy masses of white muslin into dyed squares, which form the head dress for women and girls of the country. A lady missionary for a long time visited this factory and taught some of the girls the story of Jesus' death and resurrection, but when they began to show signs of interest and keenness to learn more, the cruel men in the factory came and drove out the missionary with wicked words, and so the Gospel story was shut out, and all the clever little girls, who were only considered to be like the animals, were deprived of the one interest of their lives.

But come, we must get on with our shopping. These narrow streets and enclosures are some six hundred

years old. On either side of the streets are the same box-like little shops with small tables, upon which stand cases of most beautiful gold and silver ornaments, jewelled gold necklaces for the hareem or Zenana ladies to wear, massive silver charms with Koranic inscriptions to ward off sickness from the wearer, and tiny silver anklets, with bells to charm away the evil eye from the tiny baby whose ankles they encircle. Even the donkeys are not forgotten, for they can be provided with elegant silver charms. I have seen horses and donkeys whose necks have been a mass of silver. Every donkey in Egypt wears a charm of some kind, if only a string of glass beads !

Now we turn into the still narrower passages with their heaped treasures of carpets, silks, jewels and Eastern embroideries.

You must not be in a hurry, but sit down, salaam a great many times, and drink some Persian tea. How are all those handsome trays, bowls and vases made ? Just take a peep round the corner, and you will see the patient Eastern at work, carving minute patterns and pictures upon plain pieces of brass. Suddenly you become aware of the clinking of hammers on metal all along the passage in front of you, and then you realise you are in the brass bazaar, but our pockets are very empty, so we must be content to examine and enjoy seeing the beautiful wares without possessing them. Egyptian, Jew, Turk, and Persian, are all one in their eagerness to display their goods. Sometimes they will say, " All I have is yours, Oh stranger ! " but then they do not mean it ! In the days of long ago the merchants could not carry on their business so peacefully. In the reign of the Mamelukes little children were carried off by force, and the poor

vendors of these beautiful wares would hide away in these narrow passages for days with the gates shut, and when the power of the Mamelukes was broken, there still followed days of oppression and cruelty, when men and women, boys and girls, were bought and sold as slaves.

On the Island of Roda, where Moses was supposed to have been hidden among the bulrushes, there lives a poor woman who remembers as a little child being stolen away from her home while playing with her brothers and sisters. She tells how she was carried away by a man riding an Arab horse which simply flew along the desert until it reached the coast, then she was put into a big ship and carried away to a strange country, and although she is quite old she has never seen any of her own people again. Such a thing could not happen now, because England is taking care of Egypt.

You have all heard of the battle of Tel el Kabeer, which means "the big hill," and how our gallant troops rode over the hot sandy desert to take possession of Cairo. Between Port Said and Cairo there is a spot, silent with memories, marked by some small wooden crosses, which show us how some of our brave soldiers fell.

Then, after that memorable ride from Tel el Kabeer to Cairo, the English cavalry arrived, so tired they could hardly keep on their horses, but with their eyes fixed on one spot. They rode on through the city streets until they arrived at the formidable-looking doors of the citadel. Their leader inquired for the one in command and was told he was asleep. "Wake him up," was the order, "and tell him to surrender."

Whether the sleepy Egyptian imagined that a huge army of English soldiers on horseback, with guns

and with swords, was waiting at the great citadel gates, instead of less than two hundred tired men, history does not say ; but one fact remains, he came forth, gave up the keys, and some four thousand of Arabi's soldiers walked quietly out to make way for England's little handful of men.

But we must finish our shopping expedition, we have not seen everything yet. Let us find our way into the silver-smiths' bazaar. Here as elsewhere sits the patient Egyptian waiting to catch the unsuspecting traveller ;—we take a hasty glance at the fine filagree work, and then hurry out again into fresher air.

Now we are once more in the picturesque Mouski, which is a very long narrow street, thronged with people and vehicles. We are nearly at the top, and we have to reach the bottom. Men riding charm-bedecked donkeys call out "To your right !" The man with the carriage says "To your left !" The porter bent under the weight of his burden screams, "Take care of your legs !" And the man who carries cool refreshing drink, heralding the same by noisy clanging of brass bowls, sings in a dreamy voice, "Drink, oh thirsty one, the heat is great, and the journey before you may be long ; drink water sweeter than honey !" And so through this exciting rabble, you make your way back to Egypt's "Clapham Junction," the central square where we shall find a tram to take us home.

CHAPTER XII

A VISIT TO AN EGYPTIAN VILLAGE

ONE very hot day in May, a few years ago, a little party was seen wending its way down to the river. A Nile boat was procured, and every one stepped aboard.

The party consisted of a venerable old man carrying a Bible, his son burdened with a large bag containing medicines of all descriptions, several ladies, all of whom carried some portion of the Gospel story, and although it was only six a.m. the fiery fingers of ancient Ra had already tipped the cloudless sky with golden sunlight. The tiny boat with its human cargo glided swiftly across the Nile waters, carrying the little party safely over to the other side. You ask, "Where are they going? and whence the joy written upon the faces of each? Are they not afraid of the scorching heat which will presently make them feel so exhausted?" No—for they are the messengers of the Gospel, and have the promise of God that the sun shall not smite them by day. They are on their way to carry the glad tidings of peace and joy. Let us ask permission that we too may go and see all that is done in God's name to-day. Presently several donkeys, decorated with blue and white glass beads, to charm away any danger which may be lurking near, trot up and they carry us to the railway station; soon the train runs alongside the platform, and we take our seats, and run through the flax and bean fields for twenty miles, thus finishing the second stage of our journey. Again we mount some gaily caparisoned donkeys, and begin the third and last stage of our journey, through pasture land, until we arrive at a village, as usual reposing under the shelter

of the palm trees. The name of this village has three letters—A, R, W. It contains about ten thousand people. We are acquainted with one little boy from among the ten thousand, but the village people know a great deal about us, having heard from M—, who once spent several months in the hospital. It is a point of etiquette to go straight to the house of the chief man when entering a village. When the host meets you, salutations and greetings are exchanged. "May your day be happy," says your host, at the same time he will touch your hand and kiss his own, saying, "You have honoured us ; we really have missed you ; you have brought light upon us. Thank God for your safety." To each greeting there is an appropriate reply, and it is very embarrassing if you do not know their language to return the equivalents of the compliments thus showered upon you.

A great deal of time is spent in repetition of these or similar phrases. You remember, when the Lord Jesus was sending forth His disciples, He said, "Salute no man by the way," and now you can understand the reason why.

After a time, coffee is served in tiny cups, and it is as a tribute to the host's hospitality that you drink it. When your cup is empty you return it to the tray presented you by the servant who stands waiting, and as you put the cup down you say, "Coffee for ever," and the answer is "May your life go on for ever." Sometimes spoonfuls of jam are given you, which you boys and girls might prefer !

Soon after coffee, food will be served, and your host compels you to eat more than you really care for, adjuring you, by every one whom you love, to eat this thing or that. Very often, after you would naturally say, "Quite sufficient, thank you !" he

obliges you to eat a large piece of meat for his sake, or for somebody else's sake, and persists in apologising for the food as being unfit for your honourable presence, although a sheep and turkey have been killed for the occasion. Sometimes the eye of the sheep is given to you as a great delicacy. I wonder how we shall fare on this particular visit. We must not forget that we too are the disciples of the Lord, and have not too much time to spend in salaams. We are shown into a large guest room, very simply furnished, and we drink the usual coffee. Then we explain the reason of our visit. The host, having done the polite, will leave us to the women's part of his household. The old Catechist and his son follow the host to his part of the house, and we are free to talk to the women and children around us.

All through the rest of the time we are telling the good news of salvation, and the sick are brought in and laid at our feet. For some we have the needful remedies, for others a journey to the hospital must be advised.

At mid-day we are requested^m to go to an upper room and eat. We have brought our own food, we say, and would prefer to sit in the open fields. A shadow of disappointment crosses the face of our host, who ignores our remark, and says, "Come, for all things are ready." Remonstrance is unavailing, and we follow the servant to where a large flat table is placed on a piece of matting, and around it we are invited to sit, upon the floor. A round flat loaf is placed for each one, also a towel, pepper, salt, and native cheese. Then a large turkey, which has been caught, killed and cooked since our arrival, is placed in the centre, and soon every one is hard at work, manipulating the turkey with his or her fingers. Just as we think we

have finished, another bird is placed before us, and we eat a little more for the sake of our host and for the sake of every one we love !

We return thanks, and soon we are scattered about the village, spreading the good tidings of great joy. We go into one house and see a little child-wife, looking oh, so sad, and her friends say, "Can you not count her stars that she may know if she is always to be unhappy ? Her husband has beaten and sent her away." We tell her of the One who loves her, and can make her happy, then pass on and repeat the story of the death and resurrection of Him who came to save. Another little child is brought to us, looking so ill ; "We have tried everything," say his friends, "but our barbers and charms cannot cure him, and although we have poured boiling oil over the wound and ironed it with a red hot iron he still remains ill, and, indeed, is growing worse." We tell them to go straight to the hospital, without delay. On and on we go, until the sun dips into the west and we remember we are far from home. Donkeys were provided by our kind host for our return journey, and a beautiful Arab steed was led into the courtyard, whose saddle was crimson velvet, and this was to be the seat of honour for the member of the party who had ministered to the sick.

Late in the evening was it before we reached our home in the Mission compound, and how glad we were to go to our rooms, greatly impressed by all we had seen, and more earnest in prayer that the Good Shepherd would reveal Himself to the lonely lambs and sheep of this other fold.

One day a beautiful little girl was brought from one of these villages. She was very ill, and every bed was full. What do you think her name was ? Sitt el

Kull ; which means “ Lady of all,” and her story is told in the following poem :—

A VILLAGE CHILD

“ A LITTLE village maiden fair
Is sitting by my knee ;
Her eyes of deepest hazel are,
Her lashes long and free.

Her tiny mouth is opening
To tell its tale of woe,
The little face is pale and sad,
All clouded is the brow.

No little village maiden she,
From happy Western land,
But child of desert, hut, and palm,
In Egypt's scorching sand.

No little village maiden fair,
Attired like one of you,
But bare of foot and jewel decked,
In flowing robes of blue.

The flowing robes are broidered o'er
In silks of brightest red,
A twisted veil of black enfolds
The stately little head.

No word of tender Saviour's love
Has ever reached her ear,
She nothing knows of Him who died
To save from sin and fear.

The story of His wondrous birth,
And death on Calvary's tree,
A story is that's all unknown
To the maiden at my knee.

The little village maiden fair,
A little sufferer she,
She long has needed skill and care,
That healthy she might be.

She looks up half confidingly,
Half frightened and half shy ;
She seems to trust the English ' Sitt,'
Who waits for her reply.

' Your name ? my little maiden fair,
' I pray you tell to me ' ;
' Lady of all,' she calmly said,
With childish majesty !

' And why this name ? ' I wondering said,
And bending o'er her smiled,
' Because she lovely is and good,'
Her village friend replied.

' And you have brought her here to see,
If Christian skill avail ? '
For two long years she suffered has,
And weak has grown and pale.

The Doctor here will do his best
For the little village maid,
But power to heal is but from Him
Who heaven and earth hath made.

A little cot is needed sore
For the little maiden fair,
But every bed is over-full
With other sick ones there.

Will little English children glad
Look up to God above,
And ask Him how they too may send
The tokens of their love ?

And ask Him for the needed gold,
And shining silver store ;
That Egypt's little sufferers
May never suffer more.

But wrapped around with love and care,
May gently tended be,
And learn of Him who when on earth
Said, ' Bring them unto Me.' "

H. E. M. S. C.



THE MISSION PLAYGROUND

CHAPTER XIII

AN EGYPTIAN SUNDAY SCHOOL

It was suggested in a previous chapter that you boys and girls might like to pay a visit to the Mission premises, with their promise of the dawn of a New Era in the history of Egypt, and see all the brown, yellow, and sometimes black children who gather Sunday by Sunday to learn about the Christian religion.

This one hour and a half on Sunday afternoon is their only experience of school life, so you must not be shocked if you hear a lot of little voices talking apace, and see a number of little feet which have never been taught how to keep still, and many little pairs of hands waving about in all directions. The room in which they are gathered is used during the week for sick people, but on Saturday it has a special tidying-up, ready for Sunday use.

At two p.m. the door-keeper takes the bell (and you remember what I said about the verb "to beat,"—although he shakes its tongue to and fro as we should do, he is said to beat it), the beating of the bell has the desired effect, and presently there rises up from the edge of the river a crowd of some of the dirtiest and yet some of the prettiest little boys and girls you ever saw. Nearly every little girl carries perched on her shoulder a baby brother or sister. They rush without ceremony into the compound, but there they are intercepted and made to walk quietly and orderly into the classes provided for them.

A kind Syrian nurse from the hospital takes her place in a class of some thirty or forty girls, and if only you could peep behind the scenes you would hear such sad

stories, connected with the lives of several of her girls. Some have been married and cast aside by their husbands for some trivial fault, and then how glad they are once more to find their way back to school, where they know they are loved and cared for.

A blind girl sits among a class of the very naughtiest but sweetest little folk, who try her patience to the utmost. A kind missionary takes another class and I am sure that, although she is accustomed to teaching all through the week, she has never taught such pieces of humanity as those before her. Still another class of mischievous little boys is taught by one of the day-school boys, who sometimes has to appeal to the superintendent to restore order! Now we are going to sing that hymn we spoke of. You will find it on the opposite page.

Be sure you begin on the right hand side of the page, and open the book at the end, which we call the beginning. "Oh dear," you say, "Is this singing?" Yes! This is Egyptian singing, you must try not to mind if we sink to "D" instead of clinging on to "E"! Before we have finished, the children think it is lovely.

Now the bell has to be beaten, gently too, and after much noise, all shaggy heads are bent in prayer, then sentence by sentence the Lord's Prayer is said, and a very elongated "Amen" comes in at the end. Now three rooms are occupied instead of one, for if all the classes were kept in one room the noise would be deafening. What are all those dirty little bags hung around the children's necks? Ah! those bags contain the most precious thing the children have, viz., an old Christmas card which serves as a register. If by some unfortunate chance that ticket gets lost genuine tears form a streamlet down the troubled little face of the

مَعْبُودَةٌ يَسُوعُ

٢٧٢

Jesus loves me. S.M.

سَيِّدِي الْفَادِي الَّذِي ٦٧٦

سَيِّدِي الْفَادِي الَّذِي قَلْبُهُ يُحِبُّنِي فَلَهُ كُلُّ صَغِيرٍ بَلَسْجِي

وَمَوَ الْقَدِيرِ قَدْ فَاقَ حُبًّا قَدْ فَاقَ حُبًّا قَدْ فَاقَ حُبًّا يُحِبُّنَا يَسُوعُ

فَرَار

مَعْبُودَةٌ يَسُوعُ

الترنيمه المثنان والسادسه والتسعون

٣٩٦

١ سَيِّدِي الْفَادِي الَّذِي قَلْبُهُ يُحِبُّنِي	٢ حُبُّهُ حُبٌّ عَجِيبٌ مَاتَ عَنِّي بِالْصَلِيبِ
فَلَهُ كُلُّ صَغِيرٍ بَلَسْجِي وَمَوَ الْقَدِيرِ	سَفَكَ الدَّمَ الْكَرِيمَ مُعْطَا دَارَ النِّعَمِ
فَرَار	٣ حُبُّهُ لَا يَنْتَهِي نَعُو مُؤْمِنِينَ بِدِ
	مِنْ عُلَاهُ نَاطِرٌ وَعَلَى سَامِرٍ
قَدْ فَاقَ حُبًّا قَدْ فَاقَ حُبًّا	٤ إِنَّمَا حُبُّ يَسُوعَ مَا حُجَّ عَنِّي الدَّمُوعُ
قَدْ فَاقَ حُبًّا يُحِبُّنَا يَسُوعُ	فَإِذَا أَحْبَبْتَ ذَاكَ أَدْخُلِ التَّجَدُّ هُنَاكَ

TRANSLATION IN ARABIC OF "JESUS LOVES ME"

owner, for he or she knows, it is just a mere chance if the superintendent will relent so far as to provide another, and without it admittance to the yearly Christmas tree is a thing impossible.

These registers are marked, and a tiny box is handed round to receive many little widow's mites, for, although the children are of the poorest, we try to teach them that it is more blessed to give than to receive. And now all are in one room again, and a time is spent in catechising the whole school so as to make sure they have been listening to their lesson. The story had been told of the ten lepers, and the ingratitude of the nine, who went away without saying thank you, enlarged upon. Z—, a very regular member, looked up and with glowing eyes said "I would very much like to say thank you to Jesus for all He has done for me, but I am afraid He would not care to bend His hand from heaven, to let a little girl like me kiss it."

Another Sunday the lesson was about Daniel in the lions' den. A small scarlet-robed child with very begrimmed little face and laughing eyes, tells the story in some such way as this :—

"Daniel had many foes, but he was determined to be good, in spite of all the fun that was made of him, and when at last the king ordered him to be put in the lions' den, he went quietly without cursing anybody—but that night sleep ran away from the king, who could not even close his eyes, and early the next morning he said to his servant, 'Run quickly and see what has happened to Daniel, and open the door for him if you find him alive.' So the servants went quickly, and one who was more brave than the rest, gave a sharp rap at the door, and called out, 'Has no lion eaten you yet, O Daniel?' The answer came back 'No!' 'Then the king says you may go—and no one shall

prevent you from worshipping your God, who has saved you from the lion's mouth.' "

We follow one of the Sunday school girls into her home, she may no longer go to school, as she is not allowed to go outside her own house. She has been married, her short childhood is over. Is she happy? No! She is ill, and as she cannot cook the food and wash the clothes, her husband and all his relatives are angry with her. Her husband's sister is greatly provoked because Praise will not return evil for evil, and when taunted with being afraid to say angry words, she quietly replies, "It is not that, but since I went to the Sunday school I have forgotten how to quarrel."

Another little girl is all eagerness to speak. Her name means "Cast Out," and when her turn comes, she says, "I love pickles, oh! so much, and when my mother said, 'Go to the market and bring back pickles in vinegar,' I used to dip my fingers into the vinegar all the way home,—they would creep into the basin in spite of myself,—but now since my teacher has told me it is like stealing, I try not to even look at the basin, but run all the way home with it to my mother."

Now the bell is beaten again, and another hymn is to be sung. We choose "Come quickly to Jesus," (don't forget where to begin!). Now silence reigns; a closing prayer is offered; the children are commended to God, and they pass beyond our keeping for another week. Some go home, and tell of all they have heard, fulfilling the prophecy:—"A little child shall lead them."

How glad and thankful we are they have not passed beyond the care of the Good Shepherd, who gathers these lambs one by one in His arms, and carries them in His bosom.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHRISTMAS TREE

SOMEWHERE, either in the Carpathian Mountains, or on the heights of the Austrian hills, stood a fir-tree. Only one among a number of others, he grew up well shaped and rounded and with a long leading shoot pointing to the blue sky above.

Winter snows rested upon him, and summer suns shone on him, all in due course. But a day came when a forester arrived with a sharp axe and hewed him to the ground. Poor fir-tree, what a shock to his feelings ! Yesterday standing upright, gracefully outlined against the clear blue sky, drinking in the dew of the early morning, and at the close of the day casting wistful shadows in the light of the setting sun, and to-day lying flat and limp on the sloping mountain side. The sharp blow that severed his stem, left him unable to support himself, and he would have to lie helpless on the ground unless he would allow himself to be nailed to a wooden beam. Was this to be his lot ? evidently not ! for there came a day when he was lifted up and carried from his home in the mountains down to the coast where he was shipped to a sunny land in the East across the seas. What was to be the end of him he gave up trying to imagine, when he found himself standing on a house top, of all places, in a large compound. The sun, the winter sun be it known, shone on his branches and seemed to scorch him in its rays, for no refreshing stream could revive him now, even if it could have reached him, and still he stood—waiting—waiting—waiting !

Now if only he could have peeped over the wall into

a narrow lane leading to what was once called ancient Babylon, a knowledge of his final destiny might have revealed itself to him, for there stood all those children we went to see at the Sunday school, and they too were waiting, waiting !

Fifty-two Sundays have passed since last there stood a fir-tree on the same spot ; more than twice as many little bags containing the precious little card, which has served as a register all through the year, have to be gathered in, marks counted up, the merits of each child considered, a day spent in a room where stowed away are lovely dolls and toys of all descriptions, and then little persons with eager hands are summoned on a certain day to receive a card of admittance, in order to make the acquaintance of Mr Fir-tree. If only he could have realised how eagerly he had been watched for, he perhaps wouldn't have minded quite so much being taken away from his home below the snow-peaked mountains, but, of course, being a tree he couldn't quite understand. The fantasia day has come at last and, although the doors are not to be opened until three o'clock in the afternoon, the children have been dancing for joy since soon after sunrise. How they long for a peep into the large hall, whither the fir-tree has been transferred, and where busy hands are loading his branches with things good to gaze upon. In fact his appearance has so changed, you would hardly recognise him. Frogs, skipping-ropes, water-cans, funny little men driving mail-carts, wonderful trains, dolls dressed in woollen costumes, pink bows, terra cotta and blue, dollies all in white, with fair hair, costumes of red and blue satin, or dark red and white flannel, mixed with blue and drab velvet, sailor costumes, etc., as well as all manner of toys for boys, were clinging with all their might to the branches of the

poor fir-tree. I am sure he would soon have had to cry out that he could hold no more. A close observer might have seen his arms bending beneath the weight.

The only thing which kept up the spirits of the fir-tree was a surprise which awaited him, for, wonder of wonders ! he saw in another corner of the room one of his own brothers, another fir-tree, loaded with bags of sweets, and oranges, and candles ! I don't know what they said to each other, but I am sure he was delighted to see a relative of his own, and strangely enough a relative engaged in business similar to his.

At last all the doors are thrown open, and the eager throng of waiting children is admitted by ones and twos. They look with wondering eyes at all the daintily dressed little maidens with fascinating smiles revealing rows of white teeth, but they soon turn to another treat awaiting them,—a magic lantern, which shows them a series of pictures summing up the lessons of their Sunday school.

Some of the children have attended for years, some for months, and how much they have learned may be understood by the evangelist as they gaze on the scenes of the Life of our Lord, depicted on the white wall in front of them, and give eager answers full of interest and intelligence as the pictures appear before them in turn:—

The Good Shepherd, The Storm on the Lake, The Good Samaritan, and the lovely picture of the Resurrection from the church at Molde in Norway. Pointing to the latter the evangelist asks, "Who was not there when the women came to the grave ?"

"The Messiah !" "Why ?" "He had risen." "Who was He ?" "The Son of God." "Why did He come to earth ?" "To save us." "What from ?" "Our sins."

"Who watched by the grave ?" "Soldiers."

“ Who came and rolled away the stone ? ” “ The Angel ” ; and so on to many other questions.

Then came a pause for prayer, while each little one put her hand over her eyes, and all voices joined together in the Lord’s Prayer. After that the hymn “ Around the Throne of God in Heaven ” was sung heartily. Then the candles were lighted, and needless to say at that moment the fir-tree gave himself up for lost ! and a hush of expectancy fell on the assembled children.

In front, by the two trees, two middle-aged women are sitting, both of whom, patients in the hospital, had learned to love the Master, and delighted to hear of His grace. Now a bell rings, and Z—, who said she would like to kiss the hand of Jesus, is called. She steps forward, and a doll in white lace, a special gift from home, is placed in her delighted hands. She kisses the hand of the lady who presents the gift, and lifts it to her forehead, the Eastern mode of saying “ Thank you,” and departs to her seat.

Then one by one their names are called, and they come up to the table—Fatima and Nafeesa, Labeeba and Kareema, and other names too complicated to be written down here. Faces glowed and eyes sparkled as the tide of rejoicing rose higher and higher. Now for the boys’ turn, and the wonderful fir-tree produced beautifully equipped gun-boats fit for the Japanese, ordinary boats and balls for equally delighted owners.

And so the afternoon wore away and sunset came, and each little one went to her humble home with arms full of treasures. “ We are so happy,” said they, and their faces betokened the truth of their confession. “ Look, lady, at my bride ! ” “ And at mine ! ” “ And see her stockings and her hat ! ” While one diligently searched under the form for a lost shoe !

And so they passed out under the waving palms, darkness closed in, the candles burned low, and night wrapped its shadows around the fir-tree. And here we leave him, having finished his short, but bright, busy, and useful life in the sunny East.

And what about the children, who are sleeping, each little head resting contentedly upon her earthy pillow, with a dusky little arm encircling her new and much loved treasure, the gift of which has not been made without sacrifice on the part of some little child in the home land ?

Shall we leave them, as we leave the fir-tree, knowing his life to be finished ? No, a thousand times—No. We must be like the dear nurse who was always busy, so much so, that her little charge said to her, “ Nurse, I think you must be an Angel, for you rest not day nor night.”

You boys and girls must not rest until the children of other lands are gathered safely under the sheltering care of the Lord Jesus.

We must go on toiling and battling with the awful dangers, and darkness, and ignorance, which surround the lives of Egyptian, Chinese and Indian children.

But all our toiling and battling will be of little use indeed, unless children of England build walls of prayer around them.

If every girl and boy who reads these pages would ask God to set apart the soul of some little Egyptian child to serve as a star in their crown in heaven, how bright those crowns in heaven would shine !

CHAPTER XV

THE STORY OF THREE SISTERS

IN a very dark corner of a large Mohammedan city in Egypt there lived three little girls, named respectively Knowledge, Excellent, and Glorious. Knowledge, the eldest, was kept busy at home helping her mother and nursing the babies.

A missionary was visiting in this district and she soon made herself known and beloved, and these three little girls with such striking names won a large part of her heart.

By and by the parents were persuaded to send their little daughters to the Mission school (in spite of the general opinion that little girls are not worth teaching), and it was there that they learned about Jesus the Saviour and Friend of children.

I think it will be nice to let them each tell their own story.

This is what Knowledge says :—

“ I, Knowledge, am the eldest among my sisters. When I was nine years old my father allowed me to go to school with my youngest sister. It was a great sacrifice for mother to have to spare me as I was very useful to her, especially in taking care of her babies for her. I got on very steadily in all my lessons at school and my teachers were pleased with me, and I became quite satisfied with myself ! One day a missionary from China came to our school, and she told us of a little Chinese girl’s conversion and baptism. That same day I went to my teacher and asked if I could imitate that girl, and it came to pass that after a good deal of preparation I was allowed to be baptised.

“ By this time both my parents had died, and I was sent to help another missionary to nurse and teach the sick people in the hospital.

“ Now I am married and have two little children of my own, whom I am teaching to love the Saviour.”

This is the story of Excellent :—

“ The chief reason why I was sent to school, was because I was extremely naughty, and I was giving everybody a good deal of trouble. I ran away from school several times, and I was always being told not to swear.

“ O dear ! you cannot imagine how great the temptation is to swear in this land of Mohammedanism. I knew that many prayers were offered for me, that I might become a good girl, but I always tried to stamp out this influence.

“ One day I felt a very strange spirit within me, that spoke to me of all my past sins.

“ I then asked for preparation for baptism, and the spirit of evil left me. In time I was baptised, and after I had finished my school days I was sent to work with my sister in the C. M. S. hospital, where I spent five years. Then I was sent back to work in my old school until I was married. Wasn't it kind of Jesus to write my name down in heaven ? ”

This is the story of Glorious :—

“ When I was a tiny little girl, only six years old, my father died, and I was taken to school to be with my two elder sisters. There were many tiny children who became my dearest friends. We were all in the babies class, and we had a young teacher who gave us our daily scripture lesson, and from her we learned the story of our Saviour, Jesus Christ. As I grew older I became one of the close lovers of Jesus ; by that time I could read, and knew my Bible well, and knew that

the Saviour wished me to confess Him openly, and acknowledge my faith before the whole congregation of the church. For this I was prepared for my baptism, which took place at Easter 1905. Truly, I cannot forget the joy and peace I felt from that day. Two years afterwards I was confirmed. My baptism and confirmation took place during my first two years at the training-class, and in order to gain a teacher's certificate I spent another two years at school, and then I taught for a year in the school where I was first taught myself. After which time I was married.

"It is always joy and peace in believing in Jesus."

"LORD, WHAT WILT THOU HAVE ME TO DO?"

ACTS ix. 6

"LORD JESUS, Thou who lovest
Each little child like me,
Oh, take my life and use it,
And let me shine for Thee ;
Oh, give me bits of work to do,
To show *how much I love Thee too.*

I know in distant countries,
Beyond the deep blue sea,
Are many little children,
Thou lovest just like me.
But they have never heard Thy name,
And do not *know that Jesus came.*

They know not that Thou cleanseest
Each stain of guilt away,
Or how Thou safely leadest,
Thy children day by day ;
They do not know they have a share,
In that *bright home Thou dost prepare.*

Lord, let me send Thy message
Across the deep blue sea,

To tell those little children,
What Thou hast done for me ;
Oh, show me Lord what *I* can do,
That they *may know and love Thee too.*"

M. W.

CHAPTER XVI

THE STORY OF AN EGYPTIAN DOG WHOSE MASTER WAS A PRISONER

It seems to me that a great deal has been said about children in this book, and as a dog is so often the friend of children I thought I should like to add my story, although in some respects it is not a very creditable one.

I was born while my master was in prison, not much of a wazeefa,¹ I hear some of you say.

My home was in a remote village with a very funny name, beginning with the first and ending with the last letter of the alphabet.

I was one of a number of puppies born on a hot summer's day, and it was decided I was the least nice looking of the lot. There was a very pronounced snubbiness about my nose which gave me rather a vicious appearance, the only nice thing about me was my coat, which was a glossy brown.

I was never washed as a puppy, as my master's wife was never very keen on baths. In fact, a bath to some people I know was equivalent to being drowned in the river.

I expect you would like to know the reason for my master's imprisonment; people, especially children, like to know the reason of everything. I once heard of a little boy who asked the reason why so often that

¹ Position.

somebody wrote about him, and called him "The Wollypeg of Why."

One day my master had some business to settle with a number of other men. The whole live-long day they talked and quarrelled, until their hearts grew so full of hatred one towards the other that my master foolishly took up his gun and deliberately shot one of the men, killing him on the spot. Even little children have fire-arms in Egypt, which is a very dangerous thing. Great trouble arose, as you may imagine, and the end of it was that my master was taken off to prison, followed by wailing women and children making a noise the like of which you have never heard in England.

The children looked on in amazement while the women covered their faces with Nile mud and threw showers of dust over their heads.

Of course the judge said my master was to stay in prison all his life, and quite right too, but two years afterwards something happened.

A notable man named Arabi Pasha revolted against the ruling power of Egypt, and one of the orders he gave was that all prison doors were to be opened and the prisoners set free—so one day quite unexpectedly mymaster returned to his village, much to the joy of his household and the family of puppies. My master was like Jacob in one respect, in that he begat twelve sons.

Everything went well until my master got ill,—but he was a sensible man and went to a hospital he had heard of, and became great friends with the doctor and the nurse.

When he got better he went back to his village, and just about that time I believe the English came to settle in Egypt, and an order was issued that all prisoners who had been set free at the time of Arabi's revolt were to be re-taken, and it was a great shock to

my master, whose character was excellent except for that one crime. A soldier arrived one day on horseback, and an enemy of my master gave the clue to his whereabouts, so he was soon under escort and once more on his way to prison.

I joined in and did a lot of barking, while the women wailed and beat their faces, and the children screamed and played about in turn.

Heavy chains were put on the ankles and wrists of the prisoner and he was made to cut stone all day in the hot sun.

Some years passed and my master's brother became ill, some said it was through worrying about his relative being in prison, so he also went to the hospital, and it was then the doctor heard of his old friend and patient having been taken to prison again and, of course, he was sorry about it.

At the end of the Moslem fast, a petition was sent to the Khedive, who sometimes granted a free pardon at that time to a prisoner whose character could be testified to as being good.

This paper, petitioning my master's release, was sent in. Time went on, and those concerned were almost in despair of getting an answer. When suddenly one Friday afternoon my master appeared at the hospital door, released, much to the astonishment of every one, and there the two brothers met, fell on each other's neck, and kissed; doesn't it remind you of the story of the Prodigal Son.

Now it happened after this that the doctor, nurse, and a few others were invited to my master's house. A great feast was made for them, and I well remember how I longed for the eye of the sheep which my master gave as a tit-bit to the doctor, I am sure the doctor would like to have given it to me on the quiet,



THE MASTER AND HIS DOG

but I was not allowed to come anywhere near the mat where the food was spread, as dogs in Egypt are considered unclean. I had a cousin named Arabi who lived on a house-boat, and he was a great nuisance to the captain, because every time he spread his mat and knelt to say his prayers, Arabi made for his ten toes, which peeped invitingly out from under his blue gallabees.¹ The captain would then have to go and wash himself over again, because he couldn't say his prayers if a dog had touched him and thus made him unclean.

Well, it was at this feast my master talked about me to the nurse who came with the doctor. She was passionately fond of animals, especially dogs, and it was decided I should become her property, so eventually I found myself in entirely new surroundings. The place was called the Mission compound.

My new mistress was splendid, she knew exactly how to treat dogs, but it was a disadvantage in some ways living on Mission premises, because you had to be so careful whom you barked at. In fact, I was always being told to be quiet, and I could not say how many times I resolved to give up barking, but all my vows fled to the breezy winds the moment I saw a person enter the gates in a gallabee.

You can have no idea what an unspeakable temptation those flowing garments are to a dog of my nature. My ambition was to catch the garment and bite a piece of the man's leg at the same time. I wasn't always caught doing this sort of thing, but when I was, I was put at once into Coventry. A Syrian lady and her little girl came to call on a friend of my mistress, and I don't know how it happened, but I suddenly caught the little girl's hand in my mouth, which act caused

¹ Flowing garment.

such consternation and dismay that I was beaten on the spot ; the beating didn't hurt very much, but it was the public humiliation I felt more than anything. In spite of everything I thoroughly enjoyed my life in the compound, my mistress fed me well and gave me quite a nice-looking bed to sleep in. I had a habit of barking in my sleep, which wasn't altogether convenient, as it woke up the people in the next house. One day I ran outside the gate and some boys took me for their own dog, and I was lost to the compound for many weeks. The architect who used to build in the compound recognised me as I was carried in the arms of an Egyptian fellah ¹ in the heart of the great city of Cairo. I had escaped from the boys only to be caught again. This fellah was asked how much he would take for me, and sold me to the architect for the trifling sum of one shilling.

How glad I was to get back to my mistress, she seemed to me the only one at that time who knew how to treat dogs, and I had a splendid time chasing cats and strange dogs out of the compound.

Sometimes I became the victim of an optical delusion and ran after a gallabeesa, acting at the time under a strong imagination that I was chasing someone like myself out of the compound.

My mistress and her friend had each a bicycle, and occasionally they went for a ride to the pyramids. I was once invited to go with them ; we crossed over the Nile in a boat, and soon were spinning along the road with its border of shady acacia trees. I had always been famous for quick running, but that day my mistress and her friend seemed so glad to leave a compound full of sick people behind, that they sped like lightning along the road, and although I tried my

¹ Farmer.

best I could not keep pace with them, so I gave up the outing, turned my face homeward, and arrived at the river side just in time to catch the next boat back.

My mistress became anxious when she found I was missing, but the boat man told her it was all right. I had crossed over and gone home, where she found me still panting from my exertions.

After that I preferred to go alone, and nearly every week I took a tram ride on my own account, and visited one of the Mission boarding-schools, and upon those occasions I walked according to hygienic principles, held my nose high in the air and sniffed in all I could of the breezes.

Sometimes I was driven off the tram, but this happened only when I touched a very particular Moslem. I sometimes arranged a holiday for myself. Once I went fifteen miles by train and passed the place where my old master was kept a prisoner, and it was natural I should take an interest in all those poor men I saw, working in the hot sun with the heavy chains encircling their wrists and ankles.

The secretary of the Mission to which I belonged lived at the place I went to, and he never seemed to get over his surprise at seeing me arrive all alone. In spite of my mistress's oft-repeated threats to send me away on account of my incurable propensity for barking, I lived a number of years in the compound. I saw people come and go like ships passing in the night, but each one who came always did some good before they went away.

It was sad sometimes to see how tired the workers used to look. I suppose it was having to take care of so many sick men, women and children, because the compound in which I lived was a hospital compound,

and all the summer long, which lasts about nine months in Egypt, more than three hundred sick people lived there, beside all the people who came every day to see the doctor. I happen to know of one lady who has to see more than four hundred sick children every day in the week except Friday, because they are so ill. You see, most parents in Egypt don't know how to look after their children ; before they have any teeth to eat with, they are given Indian corn, raw cucumber, buffalo meat, and numerous other things besides. Why even I, a dog, was only allowed bread and milk until I was quite grown up.

There is a very bad principle acted upon in Egypt, that is to give children everything they cry for. You see, very few people in Egypt know anything about the Book of Proverbs, and the wise sayings about the training of children, especially that one which says, " A child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame." I have just remembered I have told you all about myself without having told you my name. It is Toora, the same name as that given to the prison where all the long-sentence people are kept.

I shouldn't have chosen this name for myself, as I wished to forget all about those bygone days, when my old master was so unhappy, but my mistress was very decided in her opinion as to what I should be called—hence my name Toora.

I have always been very intimate with the children of Egypt, so I do hope I may come in for a share of your interest in them ; and remember you may have a dog friend yourself some day who will be very faithful to you all his life as I was to my mistress.

CHAPTER XVII

THE BETROTHAL OF "HEAVENLY GIFT"

It was Shemenaseem,¹ the national feast of the whole country. Multitudes had gone forth at the early dawn to be ready to greet the first rays of the rising sun as they tipped the Mokattam hills.

It was the day when every one forgot there was such a thing as hard work in the world.

Brilliant festal garments were donned for the first time, and every one seemed bent on making the most of the day. Shemenaseem was the betrothal day of Heavenly Gift.

Heavenly Gift was a little girl who lived with her parents in the Valley of Comfort. She was the only child and her mother called her Waheeba because before she was born she had invoked the saints among the prophets to send her a child. Therefore she called her Waheeba or Heavenly Gift (a boy of course would have been preferable). Although Waheeba's parents were well off, she never went to school, and always wore a shabbily patched garment lest the wicked spirits should cast the evil eye on her and send some dreadful calamity.

Waheeba was only eight years old, and on this brilliant Shemenaseem morning was called in from her play to be told she could never again go out into the fields of the Valley of Comfort.

She must be hidden away in her home, carefully guarded from covetous eyes, as her wedding day was about to be arranged.

Even while she was thinking over what she had just been told, there appeared a messenger's face at the

¹ Smelling the breeze.

door, who, after presenting salaams, proceeded to tell them of the approach of a number of women, the chief of whom were neighbours of Heavenly Gift's mother.

From time to time they had heard of the virtues of Heavenly Gift, and had on more than one occasion discussed the possibility of the two households forming an alliance through the marriage of a younger son to Heavenly Gift, and so on Shemenaseem the first overtures were made.

With much ceremony the visitors were invited to be seated, greetings exchanged, compliments paid. "Your baby is the ugliest of children," said the proposed bridegroom's mother.

"May the beloved prophet increase your goods a hundredfold," replied the mother of Waheeba, "may your life be lengthened and all you undertake to do be made to prosper."

During these first preliminaries, Heavenly Gift has been hastened away to hide the defects of her shabby gallabees under the brilliance of a bright blue silk, not without some fear lest the evil eye should be lurking near to bring disaster upon the proceedings.

She is now ordered by her mother to make some coffee—poured into tiny cups which she herself hands round to each one present. In the meantime she is being closely observed by the inspecting party, her manner of speaking, her walk, and general deportment are all carefully weighed.

She has also to submit to a fair amount of handling; her eyes are closely examined, as also her nose, ears, and hands.

Any lack of submission on the part of the future bride at once proclaims her unsuitable for the bridegroom they have in view.

Heavenly Gift proves a docile and obedient little

girl, and among all the houses they have visited in search of a bride for the petted bridegroom of sixteen summers, none can produce so suitable a maiden as the one they have just seen.

The visitors now return to report upon the virtues of the bride elect, the choice is made in her favour, and the little girl's destiny is sealed.

The male relatives now meet to discuss the amount they are willing to pay for the purchase of the bride. The sum agreed upon is twenty English pounds, and a day is fixed for the writing of the contract. This is done in the presence of a Mohammedan sheikh, and a third of the sum decided upon is paid to the parents of Heavenly Gift, who from that time becomes more or less the property of her future husband's relations, although she remains in her mother's house receiving instruction in the art of cooking, baking, and washing until the day of her marriage.

The next thing to be done is to arrange a day for the wedding. This being fixed the bride at once becomes the recipient of jewels and clothing, which are bought with the purchase money.

The bride's trousseau must include the necessary cooking pans, furniture for sleeping and reception rooms, and nothing takes the fancy of the little prospective bride so much as the tall mirror in the gilt frame, which is capable of making the prettiest bride look a vision of ugliness as the quality of the glass is never taken into account.

Next is fixed a day for the transfer of the bride's possessions to the house of her husband's relations. A native band is engaged and many porters are employed to carry upon their heads various baskets containing the bride's trousseau which is exposed piece by piece to the admiring crowd.

Next in procession follow the Egyptian carts, drawn by gaily bedecked donkeys. To each cart is allotted one piece of furniture, in order that no one piece may lose the opportunity of being admired.

The procession moves slowly, until it reaches the house of the bridegroom where everything is deposited.

The day before the wedding a special ceremony is conducted in the house of the bride's parents, for the decoration of the finger-nails, palms of the hands, and soles of the bride's feet and those of her girl friends.

The leaves of the henna tree are dried and made into a fine powder. This powder when mixed forms a green paste, which is placed as already described on the palms, soles, and nails, and covered over until the next morning, when the parts are washed leaving them a vivid orange-pink for at least twenty days. This ceremony is performed in the midst of dancing women, and ends with the sacrifice of a sheep.

On the following day the bride is taken from her father's house by the relatives of the bridegroom, under cover of a closed conveyance draped over with various tinselled coverings. The windows of her carriage are carefully guarded by some male relative lest anyone should be tempted to take a peep inside.

Selections from Egyptian airs are played by the band as it moves aggressively forward in front of the bridal carriage, while numerous other closed carriages, filled with dark-robed women and gaily-dressed children follow in the rear.

Finally, this unmusical band stops before the bridegroom's house, and on the threshold a sheep is sacrificed in the presence of the poor little bride, who walks over the body of the animal, supported on either side by her husband's relations, and enters the house.



BISHAREEN GIRL

Preparations have been going on for the reception of the guests. The men are cordially invited into a large tent surrounded by lanterns, flags, and torches, where feasting and rejoicing go on apace, in honour of the bridegroom. In the upper room women are dancing, singing, and paying flowery tributes to the bride, who sits alone in silence, without a sign of recognition that she is interested in all that is going on.

At midnight the bridegroom's procession takes place. He is supported on either side by two of his friends, while others go before.

You remember what it says in St Matthew's Gospel : —“ And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh.” Customs of the East seldom change, so if we dream back two thousand years we can still imagine the same kind of procession.

A musical parade is made around the village and the bridegroom returns to the house, where awaiting him sits Heavenly Gift, who is now to behold the face of her husband for the first time.

Well for her if her appearance finds favour in his eyes. Otherwise it may mean that, before the dawn ushers in another happy Shemenaseem, another bride will have found her way into the home of the little child wife, who must uncomplainingly give place to her rival ; or it may be he will divorce her and send her away with the fourth part of her purchase money, back to the home of her parents ; and woe be to that little person if for any reason the doors of her father's house are closed against her.

The sun may rise high in the heavens, making glad the earth with his warmth ; the pale blue flower of the flax may put on its best robe and answer merrily to the cool breeze passing down the Valley of Comfort, but

Heavenly Gift will almost have forgotten that the pure air and sunshine are for her to enjoy.

She is probably growing old under the burdens of her married life, she is one of the thousands who enters her home as a bride and sees but the sun-dried brick or four white-washed walls of her so called home for the remainder of her life. Many are the sad stories of constant quarrelling, followed by an attempt on the part of the little bride to run away to her old home to escape from her husband's relations, he taking no part in sheltering his child-wife. Never having seen her before her marriage, he perhaps cares nothing for her. She is his, just to serve him, cook his food, which she is not even to eat with him, wait in attendance on his toilet, and she looks in vain for a smile in recognition of her attentions to him. The Mohammedan husband thinks it beneath his dignity to speak to his wife, except to give orders. As I write I have in my mind two such cases of unhappy child-wives, one to my right, and the other to my left, both of whom I have been talking with to-day. There are many, many others known to me.

Of course, there are cases where the little girl-wife turns out to be naughty and disobedient. Here is the picture of a Bishareen girl who came to me one day asking me to write a letter to her husband to say she was always good. She was a wild, spirited girl, and was the cause of a great deal of trouble.

There is sometimes a rift in the dark cloud which surrounds the lives of your little Moslem sisters, here and there you will find a happy home, but the rift only deepens the blackness of the cloud.

We want that cloud to break, so that the sunshine of God's presence may lighten the darkness, and bring into view the intelligence and sweetness of

character which is either hidden or crushed by centuries of that oppression, the foundation stone of which was laid when the Prophet of Islam cast the veil over the freedom of women and girls of the land of Egypt, and other countries of the East.

CHAPTER XVIII

A VISIT TO WONDERLAND

"PAY up, please," said a burly man wearing a red fez and kharki clothes, bound from his knees to his ankles with dark blue puttees.

"Oh! dear," said Margery, "I didn't know there was anything to pay. I don't remember Alice having to pay anything before she went into Wonderland."

"I don't know anything about Alice in Wonderland," said the kharki man, "I only know that before you can come into *my* wonderland you have to pay. Allow me to draw your attention to this notice, and I have done my duty."

"Entrance to the Zoo one small piastre," read Margery, who was reported to be making great progress at school.

Margery's nurse, a very wise person, had anticipated the possibility of having to pay, and drew from her purse two small metal coins bearing, in a sort of straight stroke and pot-hook writing, these words, "Beaten in Eygpt." You remember in previous chapters what we have read about the verb "To beat," and all the meanings emanating from it.

"What is exactly the meaning of Wonderland, nurse?" said Margery as she was shunted through the pay-gate to make room for others coming along.

"It seems to me," said nurse, "that the whole wide world with brightness round about it, is what is meant by Wonderland.

"Of course, there are some parts of the world and some people and living creatures more wonderful than others. They say that Egypt is one of the most wonderful countries of the world. I think, because the people who lived in it centuries ago were such a remarkable people, who left behind them such wonderful monuments and remembrances. And it is their wonderful history of the past which appeals to so many people, who come out to search among the secrets of the desert, bringing to light the possessions and the bodies of people of bygone days. And what is most important of all is the fact that all these things which are discovered prove the truth of God's Holy Word.

"I think sometimes that God had a purpose in keeping the history and works of the ancient Egyptians covered away in the dark, because He knew the day was coming when people would say that different parts of the Bible were not true, and there is nothing in the whole world which has such power to silence criticism and lift the shadows of doubt from the minds of those who would interfere with the Holy Scriptures as the interpretation of the marvellous discoveries which are now being made throughout the lands of the East."

Nurse thought Marjory was looking puzzled, and began to realise that she was talking beyond the limit of her understanding.

"Why here we are right in the middle of a part of God's Wonderland," said Margery, who had been making mental observations of the occupants of different curious-looking cages while nurse had been talking to her.

"Animal-world is really a very wonderful world,"

exclaimed Margery, who began to besiege her nurse with questions.

"I wonder if animals have an alphabet which they are obliged to learn, and if their musical scale is like ours—for a scale they must have," said Margery in emphatic tones. "You see donkeys bray, ducks quack, frogs croak, snakes hiss, cats mew. I remember reading in one of my story books called *Wonderland Wonders* that grasshoppers play instrumental music, their legs are so formed that when they want to play a tune they use their legs for bows, and wings for fiddles, and, of course, we all know that birds are the chief musicians in the great oratorio of nature.

"My book also tells of a great traveller who would never allow his horses to be tied or shut up in their stalls. At the end of the day's work, their food was placed for them in loose boxes and the doors left open so that they could go, after their meal, into the yard and talk to each other."

It was nurse's turn to look puzzled, as she had never thought of any of these things before.

"Did you see the parrot with the lovely tail," said Margery, "as we passed by her cage? I think she must imagine herself a queen, because she does exactly as the Queen of England does, when she goes driving in her carriage. She makes dignified little bows to all the people who come through the gates into the gardens; she really looked as if she knew me." And as Margery was contemplating making a slight bow in return she heard the parrot go off into fits of laughter.

Margery looked up in astonishment and thought she must be dreaming, but she heard the parrot still chuckling to itself, and came to the conclusion it must be thinking about Gerald's governess, who one day took a walk to the ostrich farm, and in her hat she wore

a pretty ostrich feather and quite forgetting this she walked by the cage of an old-fashioned ostrich, who immediately recognised his own adornment in the hat of the governess and promptly tore it away, running off with it as fast as his legs could carry him, and it was with a very unfashionable-looking hat that the poor governess returned from her trip to the ostrich farm.

“Do stop, nurse, and look at the funny-looking creature in this cage. It is called a secretary bird and looks exactly like a little girl who, on rising in the morning, has forgotten to comb her hair. How she paces up and down her cage, looking too dissatisfied and cross for anything, so unlike those sweet little pin-tailed widow birds who are pouring forth their musical notes in answer to the call of the Madagascar weaver birds in the next cage.”

“I wonder,” said Margery, “what those three water-buck, whose real home is far away up the Sobat river, are talking about. There they sit with their three heads together, the sun shining down on the different shades of their brown coats ; I expect they are still discussing all those children who came into the garden yesterday, among them being three boys who had taken the primary certificate, of which they were very proud.”

“It’s quite wonderful,” the eldest waterbuck was saying, “to see what a difference there is between children who go to school and those who do not.”

Then there followed a running conversation between all three, about the various requests made by the parents who send their children to school. Here are some of the instructions to the head mistress of the Girls’ School :—“Take care of her and love her more than all the others.” What an unwise teacher she would be, who would do such a thing, because, of course, that would cause jealousy.

"I don't care," said another mother, "whether she learns to read or not, only teach her manners, so that I shall have no difficulty in marrying her."

"Teach my child not to curse her grandmother, and to kiss all her elders' hands, when she comes home from school," said a dark skinned woman who gazed in astonishment at the order of things in the school. A long list of sins was then recounted over the head of another little girl, for which she was to be beaten, though she was quite meek and harmless at school.

"How ridiculous," said the smallest waterbuck; "I heard a mother grumble about her little girl who had been in school three months and couldn't even read an Arabic newspaper!"

"These are the daughters of my grandmother's uncle," said a closely-veiled lady—"teach them to cut out clothes."

"No arithmetic?" said the fond teacher.

"Why should they learn arithmetic, are they going to be Government servants?" was the indignant reply!

"A little English then," said the aggressive mistress.

"English," said the irate relative. "Are they going to marry Englishmen? I want you to teach them to read handwriting—don't waste time teaching them A, B, C, or Alif, Ba, Tha." "Well, well," said the long-suffering mistress, "we will do what we can!"

Children when first brought to school often have the vulgar habit of saying 'Ah' for 'Yes,' and a cluck for 'No,' so their education often has to begin with Yes, and No." Children in Egypt do not know their ages, and the parents are quite as vague about them. Sometimes a birth certificate is produced for visitors to read. Sometimes a calculation can be made. "The boy was born the year of the cholera, and the girl is over his head," *i.e.*, next youngest.

One day a little girl was taken on a pilgrimage with her mother, and on the journey, when water was scarce, would often sing "Little drops of Water," as they jogged along on the camel. Little girls always wear their hair in a pigtail, and as soon as a few hairs will meet at the back they help it out with wool, and make a plait; sometimes they help to keep it tidy by making a little plait over each ear, which goes by the name of the "tramway." These meet a small central plait called the "Omnibus," and all unite in the main pigtail. The waterbuck were all agreed that the children who went to school were very happy.

At the breaking up of a day school for two months summer holidays, a number of children were found crying (fancy crying at going home for a holiday), and looking most dejected. Among the weepers was a Moslem girl of twelve years, who had never missed a day all the year, and was top of the first class. She hugged the Bible and hymn-book she had won as prizes, which she herself had chosen.

"This is an interesting place," said Margery, "and how I should love to go into that large building where Daddy says all the signs and wonders of the land of Egypt are kept.

"In my nursery cupboard I have a tiny piece of mummy cloth, which was taken from the body of Pharaoh, who was so cruel to the Children of Israel. They say it is the very man—have you seen him, nurse?—he looks so dried up and solemn. There he lies, with the kings of his era, all in their sealed glass cases."

Nurse looked at her watch, and thought they might go in for a little while; so Baby Blue-eyes, as she was sometimes called, was lifted out of her carriage and in they all three went.

"Oh! how wonderful. Are those real people sitting over there?" said Margery, looking across from the door.

"You would almost think so," said nurse; "they are stone images of a king and queen who lived thousands and thousands of years ago."

"I think I feel a little frightened," said Margery. "I feel as if all these people sitting around the room were coming to speak to me. It seems such a wonderful piece of Wonderland, really too wonderful for me to understand." And baby, who always tried to imitate Margery, reiterated her remark and said "too 'onderfu'."

"Just let us take a peep into the jewel room," said Margery, "before we go." And there they gazed upon some of the most ancient and costly jewels in the world, all dug up from the graves of dead people, who had taken with them these ornaments for the future life. How beautiful must have been the gold of Egypt in those days. The discovery of the royal tombs is an old story now, but for many years bands of robbers used to open the tombs and carry off the coffins containing the mummies to Cairo. The Arabs tell how they were obliged to go armed in secret, and how they stole up rugged mountain paths, and crept down into dark musty caves. When once in possession of their mighty burdens, they would steal softly down the mountain side, and stumble under their weight to the river side, where rafts were waiting to float them down the Nile.

Those strange boats, the wood of which is crumbling away, were once the funeral barks of a king who, when he died, was taken in one of them from one side of the river to the other. The other boat was probably for his Ka, or double, who would accompany him

wherever he went after death. Look at the two little hawk-headed gods sitting on two poles, those were to take care of them on their unknown journey.

The lights were twinkling by the river side, and nurse knew it was time to be getting home.

"I like going home when the road is lighted," said Margery, "it all looks so mysterious." And everything to Margery and her baby sister that night became a mystery in the land of sleepy dreams.

CHAPTER XIX

NOTES BY THE WAY

LIFE on a house-boat is a pleasant experience, so long as we have not to wage war with robbers, flies or dust-storms. The boat lies moored to the canal bank, and is surrounded by a bewildering sea of human life ; animal life also forms an interesting addition to the busy scene. This boat is the missionary doctor's home.

It is early morning and we are sitting at breakfast. I rather imagine that boys and girls and grown-up people are still in the land of dreams in England. Our doors are open ; we gaze to the right, and behold the timid gamoos or buffalo, the stately camel, the proverbial donkey, all being led forth, sometimes by a woman, sometimes by a man, and very often by little children, to the labours of the day.

We look to the left, and behold the follower of Islam's prophet is at prayer on nature's carpet, with the blind-folded cow patiently turning the water-wheel, which is to satisfy the thirsty earth, in the background.



LITTLE BOATS WITH STATELY SAILS

We gaze before us and see the elegant little boats, with stately sails, taking the bend of the river and coming majestically towards us; they trouble the water as they pass by, rocking our boat a little, and then pass on out of sight, with their burden of wheat or some other grain which they are carrying to far-off destinations.

Many of the animals we have seen leaving their resting places are now safely embarked in the chain ferry-boat, and are being conducted across to the other side to various fields of labour.

Breakfast over, we close our doors and commit ourselves and our work into the hand of God our Father.

The doctor has gone to his dispensary, in a village of some eight thousand people. The missionary's wife is trying to teach a village boy how to cook. I know a missionary who had a cook, who, when told to make a roly-polly pudding, wouldn't bring it to the table, and when asked what his objection was, said, he had never before seen a pudding in a gallabeea and wasn't sure if it was quite the proper thing to undress it before bringing it to table.

I go and sit under the shade of the lebekh tree, to teach a number of women and girls who have gathered together, and they are soon interested in the story of the brazen serpent. After listening for some time they become anxious to get on to their daily work in the fields, for they are peasants, but still they linger, exclaiming, "Oh! if we could but listen all day to such words, they would make our hearts glad."

The children in this village are like wild little animals, so we promise them a Sunday school all to themselves on the following Sunday, if only they will relieve us of their unwelcome noise while we are talking

to their mothers. We are overwhelmed by the picture of these hundreds of neglected little children of Egypt.

We went to-day to call on the magistrate's wife. What a mixture of majesty and stately untidiness. There is the first announcement that Englize¹ have arrived, and instead of the neatly-dressed servant to open the door, a crowd of nice-looking but dirty, unruly little boys and girls all crowd around one, each wanting to get the best view of the strange visitor. Several women with stately mien and flowing robes, with long plaits of silk rope suspended from their hair, carry their tiny babies over the shoulder—each child gnawing at a piece of sugar cane.

We have reached the entrance hall which is filled with animals; the floor is of earth, and in a far corner sits a woman before a large cooking pot containing the evening meal for many members of the family, who will all presently be dipping into the same dish.

We are now conducted over some dried sugar cane husks and invited into the upper room. We are met on the threshold by the all powerful mother-in-law, and conducted to a seat on the divan.

“ Ahlan wa sahlán,”

“ Welcome, thrice welcome.”

“ Ezzey koom? Salaamat.”

“ How are you? Peace.”

“ Beitna munowwir bikoom.”

“ Our home is enlightened by your presence.”

“ Allah yinawwir ‘aleykum.”

“ God send you light.” etc.

¹ English.

A description of the upper room is of interest. This floor is also made of mother earth, but a carpet of brilliant colour, and colossal pattern covers it. The walls are ignorant of the white-wash brush, and the rafters are a refuge for bats.

Slung from one side of the room to the other is what we should call an apology for a clothes line, over which are thrown garments of various descriptions. The half-naked children are by this time climbing over the divan upon which we are seated. Some are making an examination of our clothes, while others give a sharp tug at a hairpin expecting to see our hair drop off! Your hair, if you have any, is a very particular attraction.

Refreshments are brought, in the shape of tiny cups of coffee, and oranges gathered from the orange grove close by. Alas! we did not hasten to tear the peel from our orange with our own teeth, so it is done for us, and the peel thrown on to the gorgeous carpet, at which toothless granny exclaims, scolds, and denounces the culprit, all in one breath. The colour of our orange has suffered considerably, prints of unwashed fingers being all too visible.

The time has come when they seem fairly satisfied, when a sensation is caused by the appearance of the daughter-in-law, who during preliminaries has retired to robe.

She walks majestically into the room clothed in a pale pink silk which is covered with delicate satin spots. We admire, and say many things to compliment her upon her good taste, whereupon she sails across to the other side of the room, opens her bride's box, and produces with much ceremony several gorgeously-coloured gallabeeas, all more or less handsome. These

have each to be remarked upon, and a sigh of regret escapes the lips of others less favoured.

It seems so strange to these people, that our only motive in visiting them should be to tell them about God, and their need of a Saviour. Sometimes one will exclaim, "Oh! Coverer" (one of their names for God) "who are these strangers? Are they Adam's descendants?" Another will make answer, "Of course they are. Have they not ten fingers, two feet, eyes and nose just as we have?"

We mount our donkeys and return to our home on the river, and our thoughts go out to a thirsty land as we pass by the groaning water-wheel, and watch the men throwing up the buckets of water from the refreshing stream, relieving the dry, parched earth which in time will bring forth the pink and yellow water-melons the Egyptians so long for. As I write, thick darkness has gathered around us, all is silent except for the distant bark of the watch-dog, and the wail of some wild bird's cry.

Suddenly there is a stir, a pattering of shoeless feet, weird music, and torch-lights. It is the sign of the approach of a bridegroom as he is being escorted to his waiting bride with true native joy.

When the promised Sunday school was attempted, although there were literally hundreds of children, only sixteen were registered. Many others came, but when I suggested that we should close the doors, a general stampede was the result, fear took possession of them at the thought of being shut up with so extraordinary a stranger. These sixteen were each given a card with the words "Honour thy Father and thy Mother" printed upon it.

The next Sunday they were more courageous, for one hundred children presented themselves, as also on

the following Sundays, and we had the great joy, before leaving that district, of having several sturdy little fellows coming to us and making a voluntary promise that they were never going to swear any more !

Another morning was spent in teaching a young blind girl to learn a hymn, and then sing it to a native tune. I went the next day to find she had remembered it all, and this is the sort of talk we had with one another.

I told her the story of Jesus who opened the eyes of the blind, and who was waiting to give her light in her heart ; she doubted the truth of my story and told me she had been taught to believe otherwise. She asked me to lengthen my patience while she told me her own thoughts, which were as follows :—

“ When I die,” said the poor blind girl, “ I shall be visited by two angels, the chief of whom will make an examination of my deeds, and remind me of everything I have done, and left undone ; he will then cut off a piece of my shroud and record upon it my good and bad deeds, and attach it firmly to my neck with a piece of rope.

“ If my good deeds outweigh my bad ones I shall go straight into heaven. If my bad deeds outweigh my good ones my intercessor Mohammed will easily get permission for me to enter heaven, so it does not much matter how I live.”

Poor blind girl, she does not know how much she needs the Light of the World. Day dawns once again, and like the Sower we go forth to sow. Some falls by the wayside, and the fowls of the air devour it. Some has fallen among stones and thorns, and been choked. Some has fallen into good ground, to bring forth fruit unto life eternal.

Evening shadows are drawing on ; busy tillers of

the soil are returning home to their rest ; little boys and girls with weary feet and tired faces lead safely home the no less weary animals ; while others have been taught about the King of Kings, and mothers' hearts have been cheered and comforted. The seed sown sleeps in secret, and we pray to the Great Giver of the water of life to refresh it with His life-giving power, that the Lord Jesus may see of the travail of His soul and be satisfied. This chapter is only a series of notes by the wayside, just to give you a glimpse of how the seed is sown among big as well as little people, and how it sleeps in the ground ; but some day you will hear of it all springing up into glorious life, and the Angel Reapers will descend to gather in the harvest so long waited for.

Will you have a share in the reaping ?

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